TOP 20 AFRICAN FOOTBALLERS IN 2016

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MBESUMA
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MAYAMBELA
"WHY I HAD TO LEAVE CHIPPA"
Page 18

KAMO
"WHY AM I IGNORED?"
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FORM vs CLASS – OPEN THE DEBATE

Welcome back to club action after a month-and-a-half that felt like a PSL drought. This issue kicks off with a bang – or at very least the players we feature in the issue are. Cover star George Lebese is leading the goal-scoring charts for Kaizer Chiefs; read about the players who inspire him and his goals for 2016 on page 6.

We dig deep with goal-scoring chart-topper Collins Mbesuma who gives us a startling revelation about his real age – get the full scoop on page 14!

On page 30 we bring you exciting rising stars Gift Motupa, Menzi Masuku and Phakamani Mahlambi.

Our centre-spread is the first installment of our Sedgwicks Top 100 Footballers collection. We know that football is a team game, but there is nothing like the brilliance of an individual to set a pitch and our hearts on fire. Over the next few months you will be able to collect our Top 100 footballers in the world – including Africa's top 20 – based on their form since the start of 2015, taking into account the permanence of class versus the sometimes fleeting nature of form.

Some names may surprise you, many will ignite argument as the selection criteria appear to sideline some legends of the game. Take for example Andrea Pirlo, whose sublime art is rendered less persuasive in a weaker league; or John Terry, whose physicality no longer matches his tactical brilliance. You'll find some unfamiliar names too – we urge you to take an open-minded approach towards these players, who are showing that their form is not just a flash-in-the-pan. Don't make the mistake of writing a player off just because he is not famous in Mzansi!

And, talking of great players, we salute the heroes of the 1996 Africa Cup of Nations, and recall the spirit of Madiba as we remember Bafana Bafana's greatest triumph on page 64.

We also pose a question around Europe's two powerhouse clubs – Barcelona versus Bayern Munich – which is better?

It's an edition that should inspire you to question, recall, learn and start debating!

Richard Maguire, Editor



Class is permanent – Collins Mbesuma storms down the line against Bidvest Wits. The veteran striker scores twice on the night to take his senior career tally to 100 goals

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PICTURE SYDNEY MAHLANGU/ BACKPAGEPIX(1)



The beautiful game – Mamelodi Sundowns Ladies were crowned Sasol League National Champions after beating Cape Town Roses 5-0 in the final in Sasolburg

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Overeating in the festive season can lead to problems

FEATURE

DERBY DAYS

Readers share with KICK OFF their favourite Soweto Derby memories

BY MAKHOSONKE ZUMA

BEST DERBY I'VE WATCHED ...

Orlando Pirates Supporters

Wendy 'Guru' Rakuba
I can remember when Benni McCarthy was still playing for us ... we scored three goals in the first 23 minutes at a sold-out FNB Stadium in 2012. I was at the stadium at the time. I never miss the Derby for anything. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I was overwhelmed – I nearly died from excitement at seeing our rivals being humiliated in a matter of just 23 minutes!

Mbongeni Jobe Sithole
My best Derby was when we beat Kaizer Chiefs 4-1 in the 1996 Bob Save Semi-final. It was played at FNB Stadium; Steve Lekoelea was all over them on one side, and Brandon Silent on the other. The best moment was when Orlando Pirates passed the ball around and Chiefs chased it like headless chickens.

Philani Madonsela
Eish it's a tough question to answer. There are many Soweto Derbies that I've watched that brought a smile to my face, dating from the 1983 Sales House Cup up to the 1988 Bob Save. Then the 5-1 drubbing we gave them in 1990 when Rod Anley scored a brace.

I'd say the 1996 Bob Save Super Bowl remains the best. Both teams were equally balanced and had exciting players – Chiefs had Thabo Mooki, Thabang Lebese, Frank Makua and Pollen Ndlanya, while Pirates had John Moeti, Dumisa Ngobe, Helman Mkhalele, Brandon Silent and Jerry Sikhosana.

Pirates coach Viktor Bondarenko deployed a 3-5-2, and a combination of Moeti and Clifford Moleko in the middle prevented Chiefs from breathing and allowed Ngobe to attack, willingly flanked by Silent and Mkhalele.

We used only three defenders in Gavin Lane, Guy Roger Nzeng and Phiri Tsotetsi against a rampant Kaizer Chiefs. Sikhosana netted a hat-trick and Helman Mkhalele put the icing on the cake when he calmly beat Brian Baloyi after substitute David Modise had pulled one back for Amakhosi to reduce the deficit – 4-1 was the final score.



BEST DERBY I'VE WATCHED ...

Kaizer Chiefs Supporters

Siza Shabbinho Mnguni
This was the first of the two massacres: 3-1 in the League and 3-0 in the Cup! It was on a hot Saturday afternoon in November 2010 ... striker Knowledge Musona toyed with the legendary Lucky Lekgwathi, and forced Daine Klate to get the better of Moeneeb Josephs at the near post with an own goal. What a Derby! Musona left Josephs a heartbroken man.

George Mokete Wa Lekhosi
Hard to choose! Beating Pirates 3-0 in the Final of the Telkom Knockout in 2010, or winning the MTN8 last season by beating Pirates 1-0 ...

Buxx Buti
It has to be the year when Chiefs beat Pirates during the Telkom Knockout Final. The goals and the way they were scored made it the best game. Latest Derbies don't have the fire anymore – they're all about draws and no goals. So yes, the 3-0 win was great!

BEST DERBY I'VE PLAYED ...

Lucky Lekgwathi (Orlando Pirates defender)

It was 2007 in Durban and we drew 2-2. It was a tough yet exciting game, and the atmosphere was amazing. I remember they scored early ... Mabhuti Khenyeza after 19 seconds! We bounced back and scored two goals through Excellent Walaza, but Chiefs got the equaliser through Arthur Zwane. We were happy about the draw, but unhappy with conceding the second goal. However, coach Owen da Gama was happy with the performance as it was the first Derby for most of our youngsters like Walaza, Tlou Segolela, the late Senzo Menyiwa and Linda Mkhwanazi. The boys played very, very well.



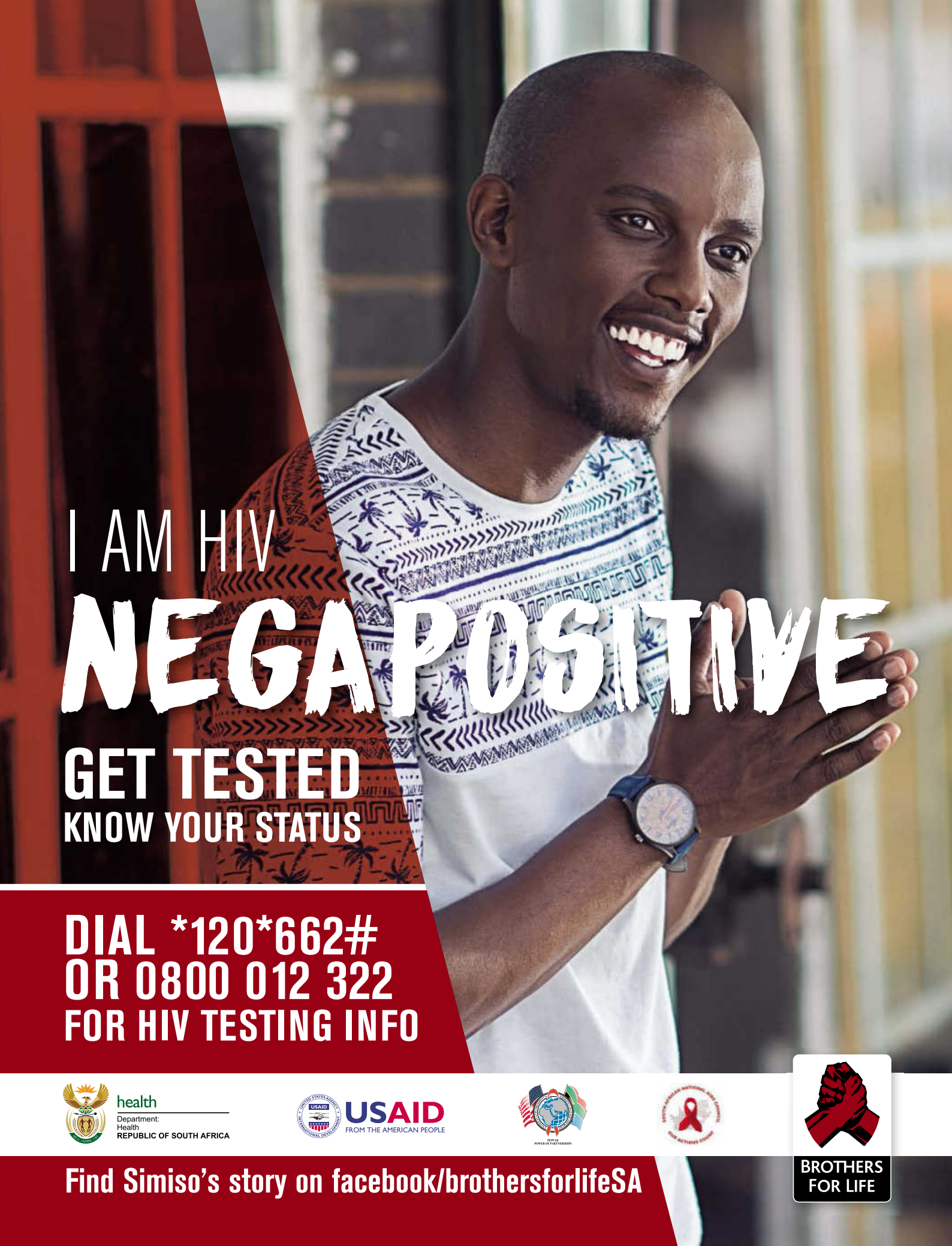
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BEST DERBY I'VE PLAYED ...

Dominic Isaacs (Former Kaizer Chiefs defender)

There are so many of them! One of my best was in 2010 when we beat Pirates 3-1. What can I say? I can't describe it in words. Derbies are something else. On the Monday morning before you won't get injured players because everyone wants to play in the Derby. The Derby gives you a platform where you can be in the history books forever. Everyone wants to play and everyone is focused! And everywhere you go – shops or garages – everyone is talking about the Derby and everyone wants to talk to you to motivate you. It was something big! KO




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WORK IN

Kaizer Chiefs midfielder George Lebese sees his current rich vein of form as a stepping stone to greater things. Zola Doda sits face to face with the Amakhosi star.



KICK OFF: This season you've scored more goals than any other season. What has inspired this good form?

GEORGE LEBESE: I think things are going well, but if I could rate my performance out of 100 I would give myself 65 percent. I'm helping the team win matches by scoring important goals and playing well. We are halfway through the season now and there is still a lot to be done, and I still have a lot to offer in terms of experience. If I can compare this season to my previous seasons in terms of goals I would say my game is getting better, but it's nowhere near where I would like it to be. I'm not going to be satisfied because in other seasons I scored fewer goals and this season I scored more – every step is a step in the right direction.

What goals are you setting yourself for improvement?

Look, I like to rate myself against the best players – that is how I grow. If I rate myself against the people I compete with, then I will improve. When I look at my idols – people I look up to like Neymar, Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo – these are players who score week in and week out. Every match they play they give their best. I would also like to get to the level where the coach, the team and supporters know that I will give something to the team. I haven't arrived at that level yet.

What specifically do you still want to improve?

It's consistency. I want to perform consistently well, work hard and score as many goals as I can. I think those are things I need to work on.

How many goals are you

PROGRESS

aiming for this season?
Honestly, I don't have a target, but we have 30 League matches and I want to try my best to score as many goals as I can. I don't have a target because I don't want to limit myself. If I set a target of 30 goals and I reach it, then I will relax and not want more.

So scoring is vital for your confidence?
Ja, too much. Scoring goals is a confidence-booster for me. At the beginning of the season my confidence level went from zero to 100 in like three matches once I started scoring. Like I said, the people I look up to achieve these things and I believe I am on the right path.

How do you feel when former players like Thabo Mooki say you have not reached your full potential?
Whenever I speak to someone who has been in this game longer than me, they tell me I have potential. I need to work hard and put in something extra to fulfil my potential, because I wouldn't want to end my career without reaching that potential. I know Thabo personally and he speaks to me often. But it doesn't put me under pressure because in this industry we are not in a life or death situation where we have survive by all means. We are just playing football, we are trying to make the supporters happy, we are trying to win trophies for the club and that is something we need to be grateful for. And every situation we get to represent Kaizer Chiefs is a blessing. We must try and work hard to fulfil it.

What else do you want to achieve?
I would like to keep my place in the national team and I would also like to keep my place at Kaizer Chiefs. And I want to leave a legacy. I would also like to move overseas and I believe that as long as I'm playing, it's still possible. And I'm not going to be disappointed if it doesn't happen, because if it's not meant to be then it's not meant to be. I have guys like Tefu Mashamaite who I have spoken to for long hours before he left the country. People like him make me believe everything is possible. He was over 30 and he still made it. Age is not on my side, but everything is still possible.

How much do you want to go overseas?
I really want it badly, but I'm not going to base my football career around going overseas. I have a club that appreciates me and gives me an opportunity to play, so I'm focusing on that. If I do well, then I will get a chance to go overseas.

The reason I'm asking is because you turned down a move to Turkey in June and chose to stay at Kaizer Chiefs ...
That was a different situation. My contract was coming to an end at Kaizer Chiefs, but they were the first ones to offer me a new contract. Yes there was interest from Turkey, but the contract was not as good as the one I got from Chiefs. And going there was also going to mean that I would be far from my family. I'm not really young anymore – if I was five years younger I would have viewed the move as a platform to achieve greater things. But Kaizer Chiefs were there for me and offered me a contract and I was happy to stay with them.

"I want to leave a legacy at Kaizer Chiefs."

Surely turning down a move overseas was not an easy decision to make? Did it give you sleepless nights?
Ummmmm, not really sleepless nights. But I feel like it's an opportunity that went by, and no-one knows what it would have turned into. But I'm not going to sit and think about things that are gone and what could have been. Kaizer Chiefs is more a family than a football club, and they gave me an opportunity to put bread on the table for my family. So I'm not sad.

Chiefs lost two cup finals recently, and are playing a lot of draws in the League. How do you think the team is performing?
I think we are performing well and we are playing good football, although we are not getting the results. That we didn't win any cups after two finals is uncharacteristic. We have a good coach, we have good players and the management is supporting us, but it's just that we are very unlucky. I'm sure you wouldn't be asking the question about the team's performance had we won the two cups – so that is the difference.

And how do you explain the number of draws in the League?
It's frustrating because we've set records before and our supporters got used to being spoilt with us winning games. When that is not happening, then it is as if the situation is bad. But we are working very hard to change that because it doesn't sit well with us. But we are still in a good position to try and compete for the League.

How different is it being coached by Steve Komphela as compared to Stuart Baxter?
To be honest with you, there isn't much difference except for the fact that Steve ➤

Lebese on his midfield teammates



Siphiwe Tshabalala
He is a good player and a great leader. When I got the opportunity to join Kaizer Chiefs and play alongside him, he was there to help me. He has contributed to my career and he is such a good person who gets along with everyone.

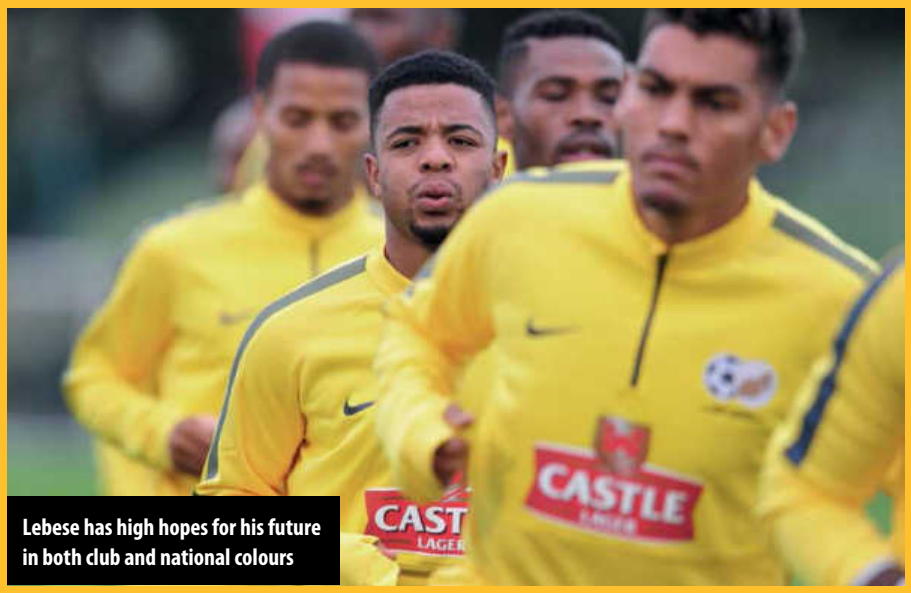
George Maluleka
George is a very close friend of mine, and a good player too. He is more of a thinker and that is why I associate with him.

Reneilwe Letsholonyane
He is a good player and a senior figure in the team. When he sees something wrong, he wants to get involved and make things right. That is the type of a person he is.

Hendrick 'Pule' Ekstein
He is younger than me and a very funny guy who likes to joke around. But he listens whenever he is given advice, because he wants to become a better player. He is a good player as well.

Describe yourself and how you want to be remembered by the club.
I want people to remember me the same way they remember Doctor Khumalo. You know Doctor has a lot and he is a brand on his own. I look at things and people who inspire me.





Lebese has high hopes for his future in both club and national colours

has got his own philosophy of wanting us to play a little bit more, whereas with the previous coach we were not getting the freedom of playing like we do now. It was all about transition and good game management. We still have that, but Steve wants us to use the talent we have because he believes we can dictate games.

But Komphela has come under heavy criticism from supporters. Is this because his methods are misunderstood?

You know, it's all about results to the supporters. Kaizer Chiefs is a big club and the supporters want results. Even though the coach hasn't won much, he is a winner, he likes to win matches and that hasn't been happening. And that's why supporters have mixed feelings about him.

Do you as players talk about this, and what are you doing to get results?

We speak about this before every session; senior players like the captain [Siphiwe Tshabalala] and players gather around and talk about how this club is known for winning things, and not winning is not the culture this club needs. We look at what we could change and what we could do better. We are doing well and everyone is working hard and putting in effort.

The Nedbank Cup and the League are the only domestic trophies left for Chiefs this season. Which is the greater priority?

We are just competing for everything that is on offer. I believe we have enough quality to reach the Nedbank Cup Final and try to compete for the League. And also the CAF Champions League – we can try and go as far as possible, and maybe do better than we did last time.

When you look back into your career, how can you say playing for Kaizer Chiefs changed your life?

It changed a lot of things. A lot of things have been taken away from me by being a professional footballer and one of those things is privacy and being myself. I'm not only George Lebese, I am George Lebese of Kaizer Chiefs, and I need to represent the club well. The part about privacy is not easy, but it's one of those things that comes with being a professional player – life changes and you need to work with that.

Was playing for a club like Kaizer Chiefs always your dream though?

Honestly, no. I grew up not having a lot of confidence in my ability and in myself. I don't know, I think it's the way I used to see myself. I didn't believe I could achieve what I have achieved. When I started, I used to wish I could play for a smaller club so I could use it as a platform to go to a bigger club. I thought it would never happen ... to go from an amateur team – boom – to a big club. I always watched the big clubs, but I never thought I would be in a situation that I'm in today.

What changed?

I think it's all through God's work because I achieved something I never imagined I could. That showed me everything is possible in life. That's why I don't set targets – I keep my doors open. Steve [Komphela] is one person who motivates me a lot, and will tell you what he thinks you can achieve. If you don't see what he sees in you then there's going to be a problem because he believes in each and every one of the Kaizer Chiefs players.

You have been getting a lot of national team call-ups. Are you happy with your Bafana Bafana contribution so far?

Yes I'm happy with call-ups, but I need to work a little bit harder in terms of playing and getting regular game-time. I didn't play in the last match, but I'm happy with how things are going and the coach [Shakes Mashaba] understands me now.

What's the difference between playing for Bafana Bafana and Kaizer Chiefs?

There's not much difference, except for the fact that I am representing my country which is bigger than Kaizer Chiefs. Chiefs is a big club and an institution, but the country as a whole is different. KO

▶**Full name:** George Lebese ▶**Born:** 3/2/89 in Mamelodi ▶**Source:** Arcadia Shepherds ▶**PSL debut:** Maritzburg Utd 3 Kaizer Chiefs 2 (as a sub, 14/9/08) ▶**Full debut:** Moroka Swallows 2 Kaizer Chiefs 0 (5/10/08) ▶**First PSL goal:** Nathi Lions 2 Kaizer Chiefs 3 (Nedbank Cup, 13/3/11) ▶**International debut:** South Africa 1 Ivory Coast 1 (as a sub, Mandela Cup, 12/11/11) ▶**Honours:** 6 International caps; 2012/13, 2014/15 PSL champion; 2013 Nedbank Cup winner; 2010 Telkom Cup winner; 2014 MTN8 winner

Career history:

SEASON	CLUB	MATCHES	GOALS
08/09	Kaizer Chiefs	1 (+4 subs)	0
09/10	Kaizer Chiefs	4 (+1 sub)	0
10/11	Kaizer Chiefs	4 (+6 subs)	2
11/12	Kaizer Chiefs	12 (+12 subs)	2
12/13	Kaizer Chiefs	21 (+6 subs)	3
13/14	Kaizer Chiefs	29 (+7 subs)	4
14/15	Kaizer Chiefs	25 (+5 subs)	7
15/16	Kaizer Chiefs	18 (+3 subs)	8
TOTALS		**114**	**26**

Correct as at 15/01/16. League and cup games only. Pre-season and friendly matches not included.

The Sundowns connection

Like most youngsters born in Mamelodi, Lebese grew up supporting Sundowns. There was a time when he was linked with a move to his hometown team. But he insists he doesn't feel any conflict when Amakhosi beat the Brazilians. "Yes I'm from Mamelodi, but when we beat Sundowns I get the same excitement as when we beat other teams. I used to support them when I was young so I still get people who joke and ask me to come home."

George Lebese



ONE YEAR ON. ONE YEAR YOUNGER

Mpumalanga Black Aces skipper **Collins Mbesuma** reveals the truth about his age, and how six months into his second season at the club, he believes the title and the Golden Boot are both within reach.

BY LOVEMORE MOYO



KICKOFF: Collins, to what do you attribute your form this season, which includes winnning the PSL Player of the Month for September/October?

COLLINS MBESUMA: I have been moving around a lot since I came back from Europe [in 2008], and haven't really settled well at any of the clubs. But right now I feel like I am at home, and that's why I am back playing my game again. Plus the coach [Muhsin Ertugral] really understands me. I am happy here.

The goals have also been coming – you had seven in the opening 12 League matches, and you were the League's top scorer going into the new year …

What matters most is the team, because if I score goals and the team is still in the bottom half then those goals don't carry much significance. But I am happy that my goals have won us matches, and we are in the top three on the League table.

Do you feel you have adjusted well enough at Aces to perhaps challenge for the top-scorer award?

I just need to make sure that I keep going and remain focused – if I do this then the sky is the limit. But although my primary role is to try and score in every match, it is not all about me. I will be happier to see my team finish on top than for me to win the top-scorer award. I will still be happy knowing that I contributed towards the success of the team.

You must feel very good to see your name up there again – it has been a while since that was the case …

In life you don't always get what you want, but that doesn't mean you must lose hope. You must keep believing and never give up. If you believe in yourself then no-one can stop you. It might take you longer to achieve what you want – it could be years – but you shouldn't give up. Life can be rough, just like it has been for me with all the ups and downs, but I have never given up – so yes, I am happy now to see my name up there as a striker.

Has the responsibility of the captain's armband provided some kind of inspiration too?

Definitely! You have to lead by example and work extra hard so that the young ones look up to you. It is an honour to be the skipper and I have to lead from the front. Plus, I have this feeling in me that I must never disappoint. Whatever I do now, I have to be the guy who encourages, pushes and motivates others. The armband is really pushing me.

> **Whatever I do now I have to be the guy who encourages, pushes and motivates others. The armband is really pushing me.**



In peak condition

There is always mention of your fitness and weight, but you look in your best shape since you came back from Europe. Would you agree?
When I came back from Europe I was injured and had not been playing for a year due to ligament problems, so for sure there was absolutely no way that I could have been in top form and in the best condition. At [Mamelodi] Sundowns I was just dusting off the effects of the injury, so I didn't play as much as I wanted to. I am not Superman who will just come onto the field after an injury and dribble everyone. And with me the challenge is that there are always high expectations ... at times miracles are expected of me even when I don't get a chance in the box. This is all because of the record of 35 goals in one season, but the reality is that I can contribute in other ways besides scoring. But I understand that people are always on my case because they know that I have something in me and I have to push.

But physically, how are you feeling right now?
I feel good. I can never feel like I am in the best condition ever because I always believe that there are some little details that I am not happy with. That is why I am fine with the coach and physical trainer pushing me. Sometimes as a player you can relax, but if you have a coach who is always on your back pushing you then you will feel complete.

Having started in the PSL in the 2003/04 season, have you embraced the fact that you will now start being called a veteran?
[Laughing] Not veteran, maybe experienced! Isn't that a better word to use? I don't think I am such an old-timer! I think I was only 19 or 20 when I started playing in South Africa. I am now known and it is easier for me to play my football compared to when I first came here. At that time I had to make a name for myself and prove myself. Right now I still push very hard, but not to prove anything. I mean, if with over 30 individual trophies, medals and awards I still have to prove myself, then I don't know how this game should function!

Aces are in a good position in the League – what is the ultimate target this season?
We cannot be getting excited about anything. We have worked hard to get here and now the challenge is to make sure that we retain this place or improve on it. The belief is there in this squad that we can make things happen. The team is coming together and we understand each other very well, so we will keep pushing. However, our aim from the start of the season was to finish in the top five.

Do you feel you can challenge for the title?
Why not? I believe in God and with God nothing is impossible. Why can't we win the League? We can win it. It is just about us believing that we can make it happen. The coach has told us that we have to believe – it is now up to us embrace his encouragement. Even the younger players' hunger is improving, because they feel they are part of a family with a good father.

You mention this 'family' spirit in the team – how crucial is that?
There is not much difference between what is happening right here at Aces and to what happened with us [Zambia] when we won the 2012 Africa Cup of Nations. We are like family, a solid unit that will stand, defend and protect each other. Once you have that unity you can conquer anything – who would ever have thought Zambia would win the Afcon against big names like Ghana and Ivory Coast? As a team we have to work for each other. If that spirit is here at Aces, why shouldn't the same happen?

Did starting pre-season so early – in June last year – play a role in your current success?
When the coach came he wanted to see the players and assess the squad based on who is staying and who is leaving. So this meant we got to know each other very early, and combinations and understanding each other well were already in motion before the start of the season.

Tell us more about Ertugral's influence …
He is a high-profile coach who knows what he is doing. He has made a huge difference to this team, highlighted by his drive to get us to believe in ourselves even when no-one else shows belief.

And it seems that for you he has made a difference too …
Some coaches chose to never give me a chance. They gave up on me by just looking at me, judged me only from my physical appearance. They were the ones who concluded that I could not run and said I was overweight, yet this is my body and its shape will never change. They failed to understand me; they didn't take notice that I was able to do what all the other players were doing at training. If I was really overweight I wouldn't be able to do what other players were doing at training. However, here we have a top fitness trainer [Elsa Storm] who will know if I am not fit and push me to work harder. The truth is that I am never going to change my football. I cannot play with another striker and you have to know and appreciate me for my qualities. Just because another striker runs all over the field doesn't mean I must also do the same. I cannot run all over the field when I know that this is not where my strength is, and he [Ertugral] knows that.

There have been suggestions that your good form is due to the fact that you are in the last year of your contract at Aces, and are pushing for a new deal …
Let us not talk about my contract in public because that is for me and my manager. What should be known is that I am happy at Aces for now.

You always look unhappy whenever you are substituted …
If you are happy with being substituted then you are not okay. If I am doing something wrong on the pitch then I have to work harder. I can support the team, but it is never a good feeling to be pulled out of a match.

You now have over 90 career goals in the PSL – are you aware that you are closing in on becoming only the fourth player to reach 100 club goals since the start of the PSL in 1996?
It is a huge motivation to hear that. I wasn't aware to be honest … I will have to do more, because I also want to join this exclusive group of strikers.

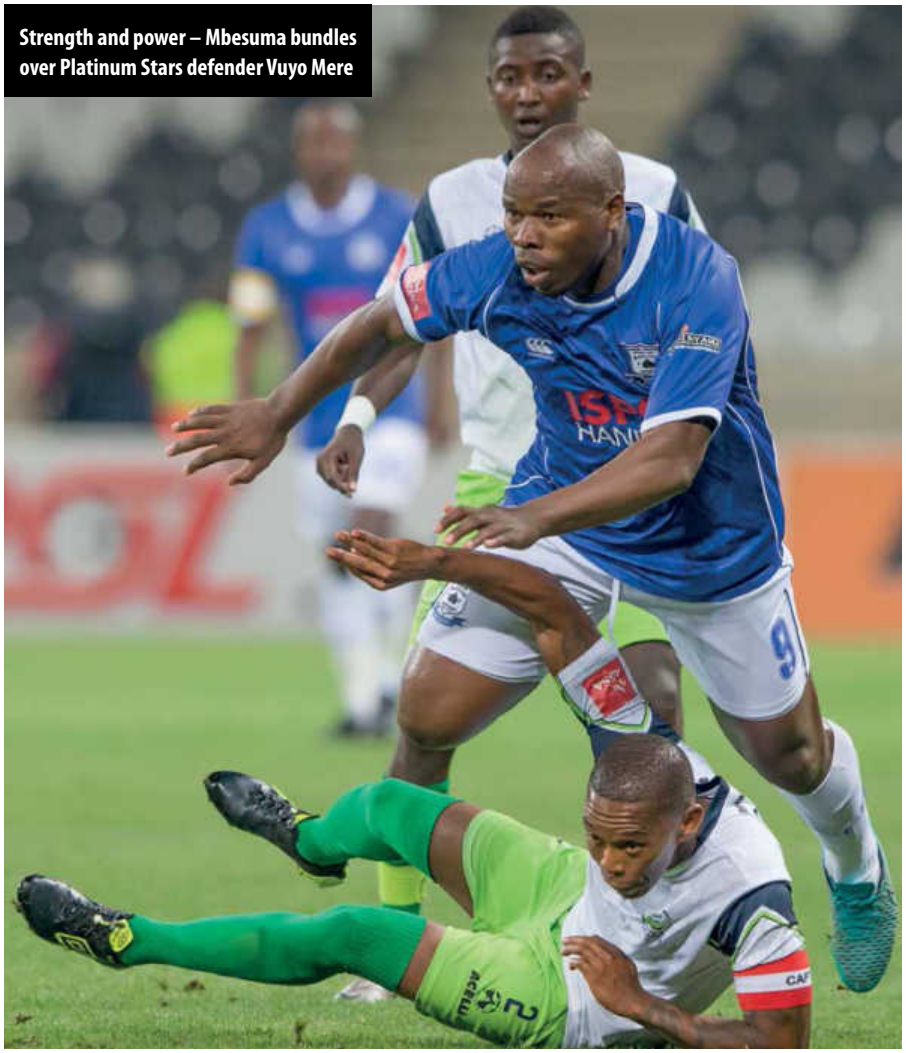
Do you think anyone will break your record of 35 goals in one season?



Papi Komane prevents 'Ntofontofo' from unleashing one of his rockets

"I am never going to change my football."

PICTURES BY ANESH DEBIKY/GALLO IMAGES(1)/DUIF DU TOIT/GALLO IMAGES(1)/DIRK KOTZE/GALLO IMAGES(1)



Strength and power – Mbesuma bundles over Platinum Stars defender Vuyo Mere

i ▶**Full name:** Collins Mbesuma ▶**Born:** 3/2/85 in Luanashya, Zambia ▶**Former clubs:** Luanshya Mine Police, Roan United (both Zambia) ▶**Source:** Roan United juniors (Luanshya, Zambia) ▶**PSL debut:** Black Leopards 1 Kaizer Chiefs 3 (6/3/04) ▶**First goal:** Black Leopards 1 Kaizer Chiefs 3 (6/3/04) ▶**International debut:** Mozambique 2 Zambia 4 (as a sub, 27/7/03, Cosafa Castle Cup) ▶**First international goal:** Mozambique 2 Zambia 4 (27/7/03, Cosafa Castle Cup) ▶**Honours:** Zambia full and Under-23 international; 2003/04, 2004/05 PSL champion; 2004/05 PSL top scorer; 2004/05 PSL Player of the Season; 2004/05 KICK OFF Footballer of the Season

▶**PSL career record:**

SEASON	CLUB	MATCHES	GOALS
03/04	Kaizer Chiefs	4 (+ 2 subs)	2
04/05	Kaizer Chiefs	42	35
05/06	Portsmouth (England)	(4 subs only)	0
06/07	Maritimo (Portugal, loan)	17 (+6 subs)	7
07/08	Bursaspor (Turkey)	6 subs only	0
08/09	Mamelodi Sundowns	12 (+ 10 subs)	5
09/10	Moroka Swallows	17 (+3 sub)	3
10/11	Golden Arrows	18 (+1 sub)	11
11/12	Golden Arrows	25 (+3 subs)	10
12/13	Orlando Pirates	24 (+8 subs)	10
13/14	Orlando Pirates	4 (+7 subs)	1
14/15	MP Black Aces	28 (+ 5 subs)	6
15/16	MP Black Aces	16	10
TOTALS		**207**	**100**

Correct as at 15/01/2016. League and Cup matches only. Friendlies and charity games not included.

Only God knows. I cannot really say. I can only speak for myself and as long as I am still playing I feel I can still break that record.

You arrived in South Africa as a fresh-faced teenager, and here you are now with 10 seasons of experience in the country, married with kids and due to turn 32 in February. How are you planning for the future?

What I do in the future is my personal life and I cannot talk about that.

Understood …

Actually I need to tell you a story about my real age. I am actually turning 31 in February instead of 32, as I had to add one more year to my age so that I could acquire an identity document while I was at Roan United [in Zambia], aged 15. Though the coaches wanted to use me in the first team at 15, I couldn't get the identity document which would enable me to be registered with the Zambian Premier League because I was under-age. I went to the ID offices and I was told that to get that ID I had to be 16. So my mother and father decided to add one more year on my age so that I could immediately fulfill my dream. There was no other way because I wanted to play and the coaches wanted to use me. So when I started playing in the Zambian Premier League for Roan United I was actually 15 instead of the 16 that appeared on my documents.

Tell us more about the start to your career.

At that time I was playing number 3 [left-back], then moved to midfield and I only became a striker when I was called into the national Under-23 team for the 2003 All-Africa Games third-place play-off against Ghana, in Nigeria. I had played left-back for the whole of that tournament, but was pushed forward after Chris Katongo and Songwe Chalwe both went down with malaria. I played number 9 that day and scored. From then onwards I was played up-front, and I scored in both legs against South Africa's Under-23s immediately after those All-Africa Games. I was then spotted by Kaizer Chiefs.

"Why can't we win the League? We can win it!"

As a youngster you were nicknamed 'Barefoot' because you didn't have boots. You overcame those challenges to become a recognised international who even went as far as the English Premier League. Tell us about that …

Life is a challenge, and at that time my father wanted me to go to school instead of playing football. He didn't believe that I would make a career out of football, even when I was pushing myself to the limit. There was such confusion that I used to dodge him just so that I got to play, even though he didn't want to buy me boots. I never had the best of everything as a kid, and considering how many talented footballers there were while I was growing up, I am grateful to God for having led me to being someone who has gone this far instead of vanishing like others. Do you know that I once gave up on football while I was back home? I thought it was a waste of time and there were many people discouraging me. And as I didn't even have boots, when I went to training those kids who did have boots would laugh at me – you can imagine how disheartening that was. But there was one coach named Paul Mulenga – a former Roan United coach – who encouraged me to come back into the game and here I am now. KO

RIGHT TIME, RIGHT DECISION

SOON after the talented **Mark Mayambela** put pen to paper with SuperSport United, he talked to Ernest Fakude about the transfer that could finally launch the former Orlando Pirates benchwarmer into the big time.

KICK OFF: Was it difficult to leave Chippa United?

MAYAMBELA: Not really ... it was time to move on. But I thank them as they gave me a chance. Even though it was a short stay, it was fruitful. Playing for Chippa gave me the opportunity to regain my form. But SuperSport is a great club with a great structure, a great coach and good players. I believe this move will help me grow as a player, and I feel I have made a good decision.

How did Chippa Mpengesi take the news that you wanted out?

Of course it didn't sit well with him, but he understands that players have ambitions … eventually I received his blessing to move on.

Were there any other offers from Premiership teams?

There were a few others, but nothing concrete. SuperSport United was the only team that showed great interest.

You took a pay-cut when you left Royal Eagles for Chippa United. Was that because you wanted to play top-flight football?

Of course! When you are an ambitious person and want to achieve something, you need to make sacrifices. I had to make that sacrifice and I don't regret it. It helped me because SuperSport United were impressed by how I was playing at Chippa.

Gordon Igesund is known for playing direct football. Do you think you will be able to adapt to his style of play?

Of course I can adapt and adjust. Gordon knows what kind of player I am and that is why he brought me here. I believe he is going to play me to my strengths. I am a professional and I can adapt to any style of play and do what the coach wants me to do.

Your play seems to have matured. Has that come with age?

I think the challenges I have faced in life have helped me grow both as a player and as a person. I dont regret anything I have gone through, whether good or bad. I believe the experiences have prepared me for the future. I have always had responsibility at home as a bread-winner, but the birth of my son Luphiwo has also played a major part in my transformation.

You played in Sweden after leaving Pirates, and just when everyone was thinking you were doing well, you decided to come home. Why?

I faced some personal challenges in Sweden, and the injuries didn't help. I was frustrated and decided to go home. Under the circumstances, returning was an ideal decision.

Djurgarden fans composed a song about you ...

It was a great feeling! I had a short stay, but I made an impact. They still keep asking me when I am coming back. I am glad that my brother [Mihlali] is going there and hopefully he will receive the same reception.

Aristide Bance told us you deserve to play in Europe ...

Bance has played for many teams in Europe and to hear that from him is a great inspiration to keep working hard.



Once a Pirate – Mayambela with George Lebese of Kaizer Chiefs

INTRODUCING Micium Mhone (Jomo Cosmos)



MICIUM Mhone is a young midfielder who has started but a handful of games for Jomo Cosmos, but who has already left an impression.

The Malawian joined Ezenkosi at the beginning of the season from Blue Eagles, after Jomo Sono spotted him during the Cosafa Cup when he put in a Man of the Match performance against South Africa.

"After the Cosafa Cup, Jomo got in touch with my boss at Eagles and arranged that I come for trials in June, after which I then signed," says Mhone, who is on a two-year deal.

A thigh injury picked up on international duty and work-permit delays forced him to wait until the end of September to make his debut, coming on a substitute against Sundowns.

The energetic 23-year-old is capable of playing on either flank and as a shadow striker.

"I have really fallen in love with Cosmos and the PSL in general because the standard of the game, the organisation and the facilities are a step-up from what I was used to back home. I have no excuse if I don't excel," he says.

"This is a lifetime opportunity and I must make the most of it by working hard and playing regularly. The priority is to make sure that Cosmos competes and stays in the PSL, plus I want to score goals because I used to do that a lot back home."

The young winger's former club Blue Eagles is a police force club, and Mhone is actually on unpaid leave from his civil servant duties.

"I was a sergeant in the police force, but luckily most of my work was in the office though I still made arrests. Having signed for two years

LEFTY SHIVAMBU / GALLO IMAGES(1)/DIRK KOTZE/GALLO IMAGES(1)



here at Cosmos means I am currently on unpaid leave for the duration of this contract," he explains.

Mhone is a nephew of former Malawi international Laurent Kamanga, and also credits ex-Free State Stars coach Kinnah Phiri for laying the foundation for his career.

"My uncle [Kamanga] played for MDC United – he is the man I grew up watching, and who inspired me to take up football. Kinnah took me to Eagles after spotting me while playing for my district select team," he says.

By Lovemore Moyo

fortherecord

Ajax Cape Town

- Veteran winger Franklin Cale has attracted the interest of Maritzburg United.
- Long-serving midfielder Granwald Scott attended trials with Slovan Bratislava in Slovakia.
- Defender Larry Cohen left after five months, having failed to play a single match.
- Shaun Bartlett's 16-year-old son Tyrique has been on trial at Ikamva.

Bidvest Wits

- The club is considering releasing New Zealand forward Kris Bright at the end of the season. Bright has started just one match. Keaghan Jacobs has also failed to impress since arriving from Scotland and is unlikely to stay.
- Striker Calvin Kadi also looks unlikely to remain at the club beyond the end of his contract.
- Dillon Sheppard will not be handed another playing contract at the end of the season, but may be employed within the club structures.

Bloemfontein Celtic

- Malawian Hellings Mhango is due to be offered a new deal.
- A knee injury means midfielder Keagan Buchanan will not play again this season.

Chippa United

- Hlabane Kutumela is leaving due to lack of game-time. Black Leopards is his likely destination.
- Nkosinathi Mthiyane walked down the aisle during the festive break in KwaZulu-Natal.
- Former KICK OFF reporter Luthando Zibeko has been promoted to the post of team manager.

Free State Stars

- Midfielder Katlego Mashego has been offered a new deal, but he has been linked to Sundowns.
- Defender Davies Nkausu has signed until the end of the season following his messy separation from Bloemfontein Celtic.

Jomo Cosmos

- Cosmos completed the signing of midfielder Luyolo Nomandela, who was released by Sundowns.
- Jomo Sono says his son Bamuza – who turns 36 in March – must decide for himself how long he wants to continue playing. Sono junior has already been offered the position of football manager.

Golden Arrows

- Milton Nienov has been appointed goalkeeper coach, replacing Musa Langa. The Brazilian was previously working as technical director at ABC Motsepe League club Super Eagles.
- The club has signed former Swallows reserve Giulio Giuricich on a short-term deal. He recently trained with Sundowns without success.

Kaizer Chiefs

- The club was recently approached by AmaTuks for the services of left-back Keegan Ritchie, but decided against the move.
- Chippa United owner Chippa Mpengesi confirms that midfielder William Thwala was never on loan at the Chilli Boys from Orlando Pirates as many assumed, insisting he was contracted to his club before signing a two-year deal with Chiefs recently.

Mamelodi Sundowns

- The club is believed to have identified Bidvest Wits' midfielder Papy Faty as a replacement for Bongani Zungu, should he leave.
- The club has been approached by Vasco da Gama for the services of Samuel Julies and Seun Ledwaba on loan.
- Argentine midfielder Alexis Sebastian Cabrera Coronas is expected to arrive at the club for an assessment at the end of the season.
- Mame Niang is on his way back after cutting short his loan spell in Cyprus at AEL Limassol.

Maritzburg United

- The club has terminated the contracts of Veluyeke Zulu, Themba Mavundla and Ayanda Nkosi.

Black Aces

- Burundian defender Valery Nahayo is still waiting to be paid his settlement dues following the termination of his contract. The club says the delay is because their sponsors Shisa Nyama have not yet released the funds.
- Liberian striker Kpah Sherman has moved to Santos on loan for the remainder of the season.

Orlando Pirates

- Thamsanqa Gabuza has been offered a new deal amid interest from rival clubs.
- The club has loaned out Siphamandla Sangweni to promotion-chasing Baroka.

Platinum Stars

- Sibusiso Hadebe's contract will not be renewed upon expiry at the end of June.

Polokwane City

- New coach Julio Leal has still not received his work permit despite being appointed in November, meaning former Congolese keeper Makweni Mayala Nkueni continues as caretaker boss on match-days.
- Star midfielder Cole Alexander is being watched closely by admirers in Gauteng still keen on recruiting him despite the club's hands-off approach. His contract expires at the end of the season.

SuperSport United

- Young defender Jino Moeketsi's loan at Vasco da Gama was abruptly cut short last year.

University of Pretoria

- Out-of-favour Golden Arrows defender Tumelo Letuka has been training with the club, hoping for a contract. AmaTuks has also enquired about another KZN left-back, S'fiso Hlanti, of AmaZulu.
- The club made efforts to lure the Sundowns quartet of Mario Booysen, Lebohang Mokoena, Tiyani Mabunda and Percy Tau on loan, but have had no success.

TIME TO PLUG THE HOLE

IT has been a long and frustrating wait for Kaizer Chiefs centre-back Daniel Cardoso as he recovers from injury. But he is finally fit and ready to help bolster what has been, of late, a shaky Chiefs defence.

Since the departure of Tefu Mashamaite, Amakhosi's normally solid back-line has been prone to inconsistency, a problem that has been exacerbated by chopping and changing the goalkeeping department.

The centre-back pairing of Erick Mathoho and Siyanda Xulu was not effective, and in the Telkom Knockout Final the defensive trio of Siboniso Gaxa, Morgan Gould and Lorenzo Gordinho conceded three goals as Mamelodi Sundowns won 3-1.

Coach Steve Komphela will now, however, be able to call on Cardoso, who since signing from Free State Stars, has spent six months on the sidelines because of a shin-bone stress fracture.

"It's been a challenging period for me, but I have my teammates motivating me and my family also playing a huge role," Cardoso says. "I also know how to motivate myself because this is not the first time I've had this injury. I've been playing friendly matches and I don't think it will take me too long to get match-fit. I need a bit more time on the practice field to reach that fitness … hopefully I will play more friendly games."

The injury came at the wrong time for the 27-year-old. After an impressive season with Ea Lla Koto, Cardoso made his Bafana Bafana debut in March 2015 in a friendly international against Swaziland. Then Amakhosi forked out a reported R4-million for the defender, who was reunited with his former Stars coach.

"I'm back now and I'm taking it stride by stride. I want to play the best football of my life, and I'm also fortunate to have coach Steve Komphela who knows me very well. He is a very good coach and knows what I can do," Cardoso says.

"I haven't been part of the team as much as I would have liked, and there are players who have been playing longer than I have so the coach will look at them first. But I have the same relationship with him that I had when I was at Stars, and I hope it will get better as time goes on."

Cardoso was watching on the sidelines when Chiefs were crushed by Sundowns in the Final, and although the defence has been criticised, they have only conceded more than one goal in the League once – a 3-1 loss to rivals Orlando Pirates.

"Yes, it's frustrating, but the defence can't do it alone; we have to win matches collectively. And I think once we start gelling and getting the right combinations, things will get better. In terms of scoring, we are also not taking our chances like we saw during the Telkom Knockout Final. If we take those opportunities then we can achieve our goals and start winning trophies," Cardoso says.

"I hope to achieve a lot at this club. I want to get recognised as I was when at Stars, and most importantly I want to help this great club win trophies again."

By Zola Doda



Daniel Cardoso is hoping to finally make his mark at Kaizer Chiefs this year

SYDNEY MAHLANGU/BACKPAGEPIX (1)/ANESH DEBIKY/GALLO IMAGES (1)

SPOTLIGHT | Roger Sikhakhane

ON THE PITCH

Tell us more about your history as a footballer ...

I never played professionally, but I was a left-winger and could also play left-back, left-midfield and striker. I played in the then-Vodacom League back home in KwaZulu-Natal, but I was forced to stop aged 23 due to a serious knee injury. After that I played social football for Melmoth SAPS, and started doing my coaching courses with Safa, starting at the introductory level, then Level One and Level Two.

Do you think it's necessary to have played professionally in order to be a better coach?

The fact that you were the best footballer is no guarantee that you will become the best coach. Actually, it is usually very difficult to make a successful transition from being the best player to being a good coach. I have colleagues in the coaching industry who were the best players, but I don't bow down to them, even though I admired them as players.

Do you think black African coaches have it tough breaking into coaching in the PSL?

That mentality is put forward by the club owners, but fortunately Siviwe Mpengesi showed his belief in me. I know for a fact that some clubs don't believe in local coaches, even though I feel we deserve the chance.

As a young coach, how is your relationship with the other PSL coaches, some of whom are old enough to be your father, like Jomo Sono and Clive Barker?

[Laughing] 'Bra J' actually refers to me as a coach in the same way that Clive does. With Bra J, I just pick up the phone and talk to him whenever I want, and he does the same. I respect them for being my elders, but we are all coaches. Clive always jokes with me, and I am also very close to Steve [Komphela], Pitso [Mosimane] and Manqoba [Mngqithi]. Serame [Letsoaka] was my instructor for my Level One and Two, and I have a good rapport with most coaches because I am down-to-earth.



"Being the best footballer is no guarantee that you will become the best coach."

Where do you see yourself in ten years?

I want to coach a national team, preferably Bafana Bafana, but I wouldn't mind coaching another country so that I gain that international experience. For the near future I want to win something locally in club football. Once that happens I will be able to move on afterwards.

OFF THE PITCH

It is surprising to learn that Roger is actually not your name ...

It is not even written on my identity document. I was born Mboneni Richman Sikhakhane, and it was only later on during my playing days that my colleagues nicknamed me Roger. My first name is Mboneni, and that is the name that they know me by back home.

How often do you shop for suits?

We've noticed this is your preferred attire on match-day ...

I put on suits because I respect my job and the brand that I work for. I have a variety of suits in my closet, which I normally buy myself. I don't know how many suits I own because I also buy suits for special occasions. I used to work as a part-time teacher, so I imagine that is where the influence of dressing in suits comes from.

I was actually going to ask you if you have ever had another job other than coaching ...

Besides having worked as a teacher back home in KwaZulu-Natal, I am also a qualified traffic officer. I have the diploma, but I never worked for long as a traffic officer because my heart was always in football.

What music do you like?

I like jazz. I play jazz and gospel most of the time. However, when we have won a match I prefer Deep House. Normally before matches I go the gospel route – Sifiso Ncwane is a favourite.

What do you normally use the Internet for?

I normally check football websites. I need to keep myself up-to-date with what is happening, and I actually like KickOff.com so much that I never go a day without reading it.

What is your favourite cologne and why?

I like Amazing Grace by Fabiani. Your choice of cologne goes with your age and lifestyle. I prefer something mature and different, yet strong enough to last long.

By Lovemore Moyo

**At the time of going to press, Sikhakhane was still in dispute with Chippa United over his dismissal.*

NAME: Mboneni Richman Sikhakhane
NICKNAME: Roger
BORN: 30/11/1975 in Ladysmith
LOVELIFE: Customarily married with five kids
PREVIOUS CLUBS: Ria Classic, Ulundi Stars, Island FC, KZN Select, Safa Eastern KZN XI (all amateur), Chippa United, Thanda Royal Zulu
CAR: VW Polo
CELLPHONE: Samsung Note IV

ONE-TWOS

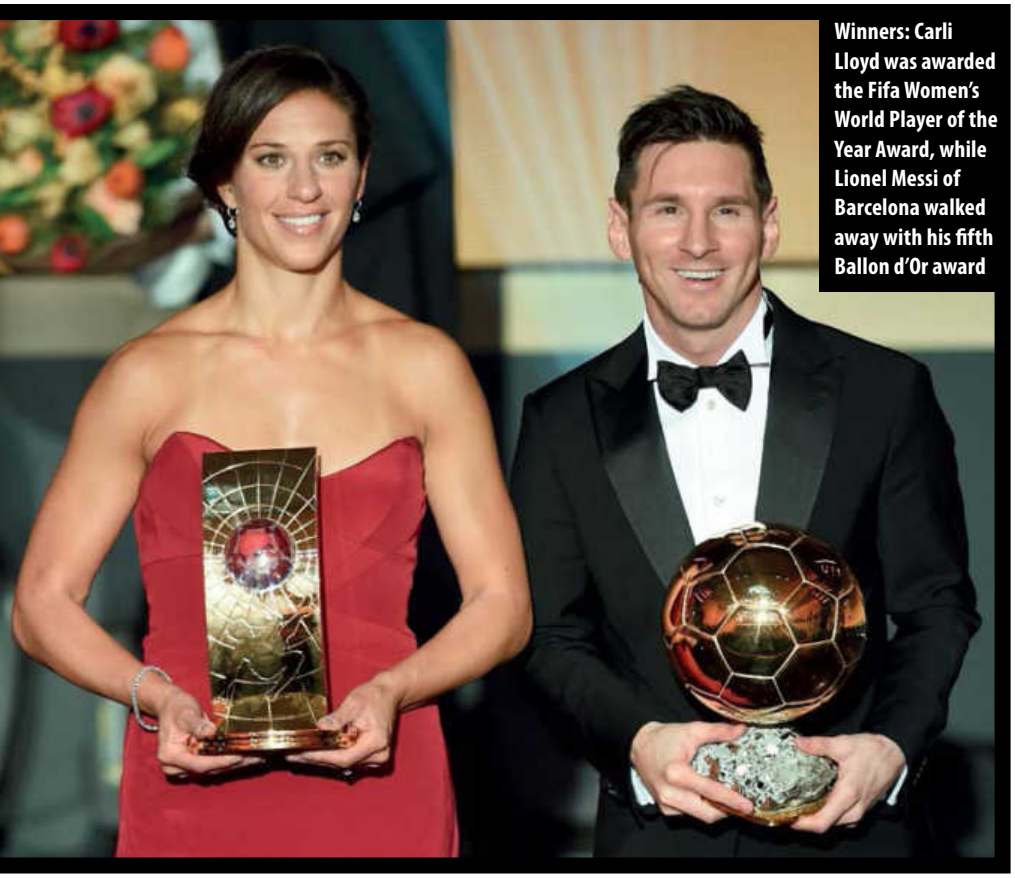
Bhekumuzi Luthuli or Thokozani Langa?
Thokozani, he's my friend

Chemistry or Biology?
Chemistry

Paul Smith or Giorgio Armani?
Giorgio Armani

Burger King or McDonald's?
Burger King

Iwisa or Ace?
Ace



Winners: Carli Lloyd was awarded the Fifa Women's World Player of the Year Award, while Lionel Messi of Barcelona walked away with his fifth Ballon d'Or award

WORDS



"We need to get a culture. We are never going to be as big as Kaizer Chiefs but we can create a culture. One day when I leave or they get rid of me, there will be a culture." – Gavin Hunt on trying to create a winning culture at Bidvest Wits

"It happens in football you know, sometimes situations don't work out the way you want them to. I have moved into a new environment and I believe it will be a better one. It is up to me to make the best of it." – Bongani Khumalo on his switch from SuperSport United to Bidvest Wits

"We have been drawn against a very good side. In fact, I think our draw is tougher than Chiefs'. Chicken Inn is not an easy team." – Pitso Mosimane on Mamelodi Sundowns' CAF Champions League opponents Chicken Inn

Good month for ...

Lorenzo Gordinho



In Erick Mathoho's absence, the young defender won two consecutive Man of the Match awards to end 2015, and start the new year, with a bang.

Bad month for ...

Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini



Both banned from all football-related activities for eight years by Fifa's Ethics Committee.

PALOOKAS



Safa – for not paying Banyana Banyana their promised bonus for qualifying for the Olympics, nor their daily stipend for training camps.

PLAYMAKER



Pitso Mosimane – Mamelodi Sundowns' Telkom Knockout victory means the Brazilians' coach has now won every trophy on offer in domestic football.

Also last month

- Borussia Dortmund forward Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang is named 2015 CAF Footballer of the Year.
- Giovanni Solinas is appointed as new coach of Free State Stars – the first Italian coach in the PSL – while his predecessor Ernest Middendorp joins Maritzburg United for the third time.
- Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid receive transfer bans from Fifa for irregularities in the signing of international underage players.
- Siyabonga Nomvete leaves Moroka Swallows to join AmaZulu.
- Striker Prince Nxumalo starts his first game for Ajax Cape Town in four months following his double epileptic attack in August and September last year.
- A bus carrying amateur football players and fans plunges into a river in eastern Mexico, leaving 20 people dead.
- The PSL appoint Michael Murphy as the head of their legal division.
- Orlando Pirates goalkeeper Brighton Mhlongo returns from injury with a Man of the Match display against AmaTuks – his first appearance since August 2015.

MATTHIAS HANGST/GETTY IMAGES(1)/LEFTY SHIVAMBU/GALLO IMAGES(1)/SHAUN BOTTERILL/GETTY IMAGES(1)/SYDNEY MAHLANGU/BACKPAGEPIX(1)/ANESH DEBIKY/GALLO IMAGES(1)/RICHARD HUGGARD/GALLO IMAGES(1)

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BEST OF THE BEST | Shaun Bartlett

Former Bafana Bafana striker SHAUN BARTLETT reflects on the highs of his career.

Best ever coach:
Definitely Alan Curbishley at Charlton. In all thr time I spent at Charlton in the Premiership, he got the best out of the players, and in my opinion it was just an an average squad he had to work with. But we excelled, you know, and definitely surprised a few of the bigger clubs. All of Charlton's later later problems just goes to show how bad things can get with the lack of finacial support from the top.

Best strike partner:
When I was at FC Zurich, I played alongside Swiss international Frederic Chassot - we had the best times when we learned to work as a combination. He played off me and I played off him. He definitely played a role in improving my heading ability – that was the way we played off each other. In the national team, the best combination was with Brendan Augustine – we were a Little-and-Large act feeding off each other.

Best defender you've faced.
Chelsea's John Terry! What an out-and-out defender – we used to say about Terry that either the defender or the ball would go past him, not both!

And the best keeper you have faced?
Peter Schmeicel, who I came up against in England in the latter part of his career. Schmeicel's his physical presence and his positioning at set pieces was so indimidating.

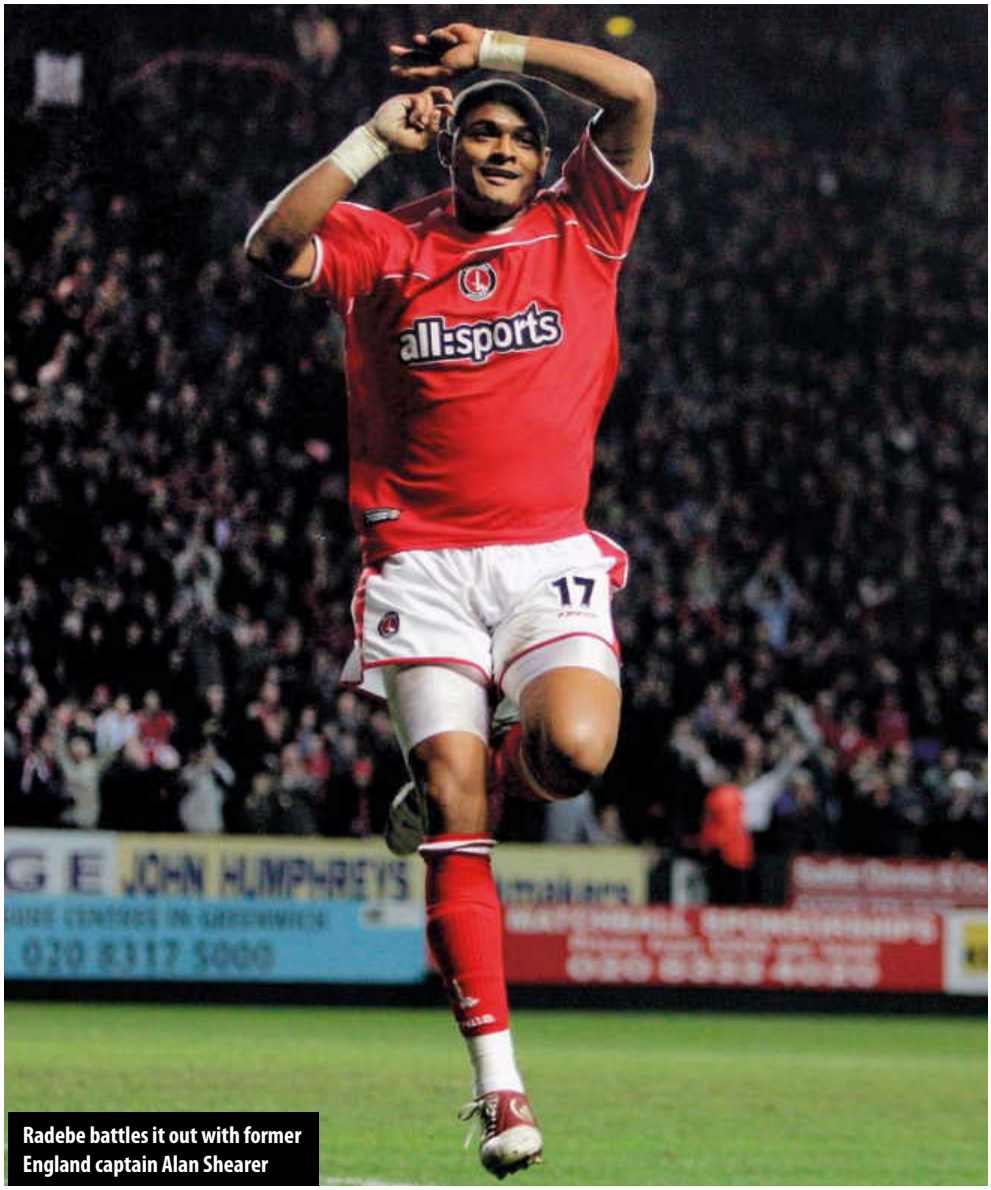
The best stadium you have played at?
I was fortunate to play at Allianz Arena in Munich, in a match organised by Clarence Seedorf for the Goals4Africa project in 2008. The layout of the stadium is brilliant, and the atmosphere is electric. There is a unique ambiance, with fans. You can see why Bayern have been so succesful there. What else is impressive is they change the colour of the stadium at night using lights – when Bayern play, it is red, lay, red, when 1860 play it is blue, the German national team gets white. It is an amazing sight.

Your best friend in football?.
Andre Arendse. We knew each other from Cape Town, and played at Spurs together, as well as for the national team. 90 percent of the time we were roomates. I still catch him every Monday, of course, and we also we play golf together - our post-football hobby! We also received our first call-ups to bafana around the same time, back in 1995, and I made my full debut just a few days after he made his debut.

Your best game for Bafana?
The World Cup game against Saudi Arabia in 1998, where I scored two goals on such a big stage. Unfortunately it was the only World Cup I was able to play in. But It got me noticed by Zurich, and kick started my career.

Your best learning experience?
I'd been noticed playing for Spurs when I scored twice against Bristol city while on tour in 1993, and they wanted to sign me, but Spurs owner David Rodwell said no. Many players can't cope with moving straight from South Africa to Europe. Later my trip to the USA to play for Rapids and MetroStars gave me experience. It was always a stepping stone – it was never an easy thing, but they (The MLS) made money, and I made money. . .

The best goal you've scored?
Apart from the BBC goal of the season against Leicester? My best was against Shaktar Donetsk in the Uefa League – it was my first for Zurich, and it came from a kick from the edge of the box. I scored later in the game, but we lost 3-2 – though we won 6-3 on aggregate. That was the best - it is probably still on youtube in black and white! (It is! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpkDBsVLtBc)



Radebe battles it out with former England captain Alan Shearer

MANDATORY CREDIT: STU FORSTER/ALLSPORT



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STARS TURN OUT FOR MABILISA

WHILE the festive break for most means relaxing and over-indulging, Orlando Pirates captain Happy Jele, Bafana Bafana and FC Randers star Mandla Masango and Moroka Swallows defender Sibusiso Mokoena decided to use their short time off to surprise their former coach at Walter Stars, Bongani Mabilisa, and offer him respite from his health problems.

In his playing days for Middelburg United Brothers in the NPSL, Mabilisa's ability to strike scorching shots earned him the nickname 'Madubula' ("Shooter" in IsiZulu). Dangerous Darkies noticed his talents and invited him for trials, but unfortunately he failed to win a move.

Walter Stars were founded when Mabilisa – a schoolteacher – was approached by one of his former high school students with an idea of starting a soccer team that would grow and promote the name of Mhluzi Township in Middelburg, Mpumalanga. That student was none other than Walter Mokoena, who was an SABC sports presenter at the time.

Mabilisa went on a recruitment drive and soon Mokoena's vision – Walter Stars – was born, and under Mabilisa's guidance, the club dominated the Steve Tshwete Local League.



Stars would go on to produce players like Jele, Masango, Mokoena, Polokwane City FC's central defender Sbusiso Mbonani and former Mpumalanga Black Aces player Simphiwe Nkosi.

But one morning in 2010, as Mabilisa was preparing to get out of bed, his health failed him and he felt pain all over his body. Since that day he has not managed to walk again.

So it was a major event on 26 December when Jele, Masango and Mokoena cut their festive holidays short to spend the day with their former coach, who was so instrumental early in their careers.

To mark the day at Themba Sinamela Stadium in Mhluzi, former Stars players and a local squad played a match, with the local players very keen to test their skills against Masango and Mokoena – though Jele didn't play because of the injury he sustained against Mamelodi Sundowns just before the break.

Jele did, however, give Mabilisa his famous number 4 Pirates jersey as a gift.

"Mabilisa helped a lot of us. We are everything we are today because of what that man taught us about football. That's why I will always make some time for him," Masango says.

"It's a pity he can't speak for himself, and our aim is to take him to rehab," says Mabilisa's spokesperson, December Majola, a former assistant coach at Stars. "Maybe they will help him as we can see that this thing is affecting him mentally as well as physically. His lower body is no longer functioning; only his upper body is still working. Our thanks to Jele, Masango and everyone for contributing money to help with his medical expenses."

The players are hoping the event becomes an annual spectacle.

"This guy has done so much for us and for me," Mokoena says. "This is just a start. We are not done yet; we are going to raise more funds to honour him."

By Sipho Mlotha

Yesteryear heroes Allan Varner and Vader Mophosho pass on

RIP ALLAN VARNER

Allan Varner, who was a prolific scorer in the old National Football League in the 1960s and early 70s, passed away in Johannesburg just before Christmas. The 73-year-old had been suffering from cancer.

Described as one of the best passers of the ball in the old whites-only league, he was a star performer for both Durban City and Maritzburg United in his career. He scored 50 league goals for Durban City in the 1960s, and then a further 64 at Maritzburg United, where he played until 1976.

Varner coached African Wanderers in their fairytale run to the 1985 Mainstay Cup Final, losing in extra-time to Bloemfontein Celtic. His wife Michelle was a former manager of the South Africa women's team, and the pair worked together as marketing consultants to Bafana Bafana in the first years after readmission to the international fold.

RIP VADER MOPHOSHO

South African football lost the legendary Daniel 'Vader' Mophosho in December after his long battle with emphysema.

Avid fans will particularly remember his contribution in the 1980 Mainstay Cup semi-finals between Kaizer Chiefs and Moroka Swallows. The scintillating first tie ended 5-5, and it was Mophosho who single-handedly knocked Chiefs out in the replay.

"If it wasn't for Vader, we would have never won that match," recalls Swallows director Godfrey Gxowa. "He had an accident earlier that day, but came on as a substitute and helped us win 2-1.

"Vader joined us in 1973 after spending his earlier days playing in Alexandra. He was softly spoken but did a lot of damage on the field. After he retired from playing he became the club's assistant coach, and made a great contribution to Swallows."

ANESH DEBIKY/GALLO IMAGES(1)/THINUS MARITZ/GALLO IMAGES(1)

MARLIN HOOKED ON NEW ROLE



MPUMALANGA Black Aces goalkeeper coach Calvin Marlin says he has embraced the transition from player to coach, and has been encouraged by AmaZayoni's performances so far this season.

The former Bafana Bafana shot-stopper took over as the club's goalkeeper coach at the start of the campaign following his retirement in May 2015, and has seen his keepers Jackson Mabokgwane and Shu-Aib Walters concede the second-fewest goals in the League – just 10 in 12 matches.

"The transition for me was slow because I didn't get to play towards the end of my career, but I have embraced it and am still in a job in which I am just as involved," Marlin says.

"I have never really looked at the keepers in isolation because they function in a team, and as keepers we are aware that our primary aim is to avoid conceding goals. So when the team isn't conceding many, we take pride in that as it means we are playing a role towards the success of the team."

By Lovemore Moyo

PUMA Competition



The all-new Puma evoPOWER 1.3, grounded in the principle of barefoot kicking, is finally here! Worn by the experts of power including Yaya Touré, Cesc Fàbregas, Mario Balotelli and Olivier Giroud, this boot has a new outsole and improved upper material to enable even more flexibility of movement for the foot.

An increased amount of AccuFoam in the upper provides a smoother and cleaner kicking surface for more precision, while the one-way stretchable Adap-Lite upper allows the foot to bend and mimic a barefoot kicking motion.

WIN To celebrate the release of the Puma evoPOWER 1.3, KICK OFF are giving away two pairs, each worth R2 799.

To enter, answer this simple question: Name two players who wear the Puma evoPOWER 1.3.

Send your answer, along with your name, contact phone number and email address, to competitions@kickoff.com. Use 'Puma evoPOWER 1.3' in the subject line.

SECRETS OF THE STARS

10 things you did not know about Ajax Cape Town striker Nathan Paulse



1 Nathan Paulse has a twin sister, Lynette, and is one of four children – he has three sisters, one older, one younger. His siblings are all soccer fans and often watch Ajax matches.

2 He started playing at amateur club West End United in Athlone at the age of five. His father coached the club, and Paulse moved up through the ranks and played in the 'dream team' at Under-17 level, when they were one of the few teams which could challenge local powerhouse Hellenic.

3 As a teenager, he represented Western Province at both soccer and athletics. He had to choose between the two, which was difficult as he was already a rising star in the Engen Athletics series, running the 200- and 400-metre events.

4 Nathan started driving at the age of 14 when he stole the oldest of his father's three vans to drive his friends to the beach.

5 When he first moved to Hammarby in Sweden, he worried about the cold so much that he packed accordingly: "I took all the warm clothes I had. When I arrived it was mid-summer and so hot so I had to go and buy some shorts because I hadn't brought any!"

6 Nathan impressed his Hammarby colleagues with his DJ skills. "I used to play records for myself and for friends and at parties. I played for some of my teammates who thought I was good and should have tried to play in nightclubs."

7 Aside from football, Paulse also took courses at the Exercise Teachers Academy, studying fitness and coaching.

8 Paulse has one of the shortest ever Bafana Bafana careers – he made his sole appearance as an 89th-minute substitute for Siyabonga Nomvete against Zambia in 2006.

9 Nathan's 2015 MTN8 Final goal was rewarded with his first-ever winner's medal. He has runner-up medals for the Nedbank Cup in 2012/13 and 2014/15, and from the 2012/13 MTN8 with SuperSport United.

10 Paulse practices penalties after every training session, and has slotted four home already this season.

By Ian Williams

Where are they now? | Frank Makua

OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT











Clockwise from left: Makua's new-found passion; in the colours of Chiefs; up against John Barnes in a Legends match; sharing a platform with Edward Motale at the 2014 SAB Festival in Limpopo and featuring for Bafana against Kenya in 2002

IF Kaizer Motaung makes the effort of driving to your house in the bid to sign you from a lower division club, then you are definitely exceptional.

Frank Makua had the privilege of having the Chiefs chairman pay his parents a visit prior to him joining Amakhosi from OK League (second tier) club Ferrometals in 1995.

"Jomo Cosmos had been interested, but they were taking forever to reach an agreement with my club. After Chiefs spotted me during a friendly, the chairman drove to my parents' house in Witbank and that sealed the deal. That was a dream come true – I was 20 at the time," recalls Makua.

He won Rookie of the Year at the end of his first season at Chiefs, but didn't build on that platform, making just 107 starts over five seasons.

Still there was no questioning that 'Disco' had a touch of charm and injected a thrill factor whenever in possession.

"I enjoyed my football because I always believed that I must play to my capabilities, which meant mostly using my talent," he says. "The challenge I had through my time at Chiefs was that I faced some stiff competition in the attacking midfield positions. I had to compete with Thabo Mooki, Doctor Khumalo, Thabang Lebese and Shakes Kungwane, but luckily I learnt from all those guys."

With fewer opportunities at Chiefs, he moved to newly-promoted Ria Stars in 2000, after which he had spells with Dynamos, SuperSport United and Manning Rangers. Along the way, he also picked up four Bafana caps.

"I actually started losing interest in football at SuperSport because I was never given a fair chance there. I would do well in a match and then be on the bench for the next one and that was frustrating," he says.

After a season with Rangers and a return to Dynamos, he joined his hometown side Witbank Spurs (the renamed Ferrometals), before retiring in 2008, aged 34.

"I decided to hang up my boots because I felt my efforts were no longer being appreciated. I was putting in the effort but some coaches probably thought they knew better. Plus I just feel I was very unlucky for most of my career.

"What also pushed me into calling it quits was that I was also going through a very difficult time in my life with my father and brother passing away in a short space of time. After that I lost the desire for football as they were the two people who always pushed me," he says.

Makua now earns a living through Hit Alliance Soccer Legends, an organisation that runs coaching clinics on behalf of Italian club AS Roma.

"My kids are the people giving me the inspiration. This project with AS Roma has kept me going since last





year and I earn my living from doing coaching clinics for them. Next year we are taking 40 of the best players that we find to Italy," he says.

Yet Makua says he has no ambitions to pursue a career in mainstream coaching.

"What I am doing right now is fine with me, because I am encouraging these boys. I am not interested in moving up the coaching ranks because being harsh on people is not for me. As a coach you need to harass players, talk in an aggressive way and have a temper for players to understand you – that is not who I am – I'm too soft. Most guys want to be coaches because they have nothing else to do after their playing days."

By Lovemore Moyo

Rangers rejoice

Rangers record their maiden League triumph

AUGUST 5 Sundowns sign Ace Khuse from Pirates, despite a delegation from Pirates, including chairman Sipho Mali, visiting his home to try persuade him to stay.

AUGUST 10 Pirates fans riot after a 2-1 home defeat to Sundowns, protesting at the decision of referee Charles Morodi. The Bucs are now fourth from bottom.

AUGUST 17 Khuse debuts for Sundowns in their 1-1 draw with AmaZulu, a result that leaves the Usuthu in second place. Aces play their first match at the Jan van Riebeeck Stadium in the Witbank town centre, and beat Chiefs 2-1.

AUGUST 18 African Wanderers put seven 'rebel' players on transfer and the team fails to arrive for their home match with Rangers. The club are fined R5 000 and ordered to play all future matches away from home.

AUGUST 19 Sundowns loan Hamilton Mahlangu, Trott Moloto and Basil Steenkamp to Pirates, the club Downs director Zola Mohobe supported as a boy.

AUGUST 21 Giant defender Mike Kamanga joins Pirates from African Wanderers. Swallows elect David Chabeli as chairman to replace Abe Machele.

AUGUST 28 Aubrey 'The Great' Makgopela writes to the NSL seeking a clearance from the breakaway Swallows side so that he can return to the Castle League after two years of playing in the NPSL for the Birds.

AUGUST 31 A record score for South African soccer is set as AmaZulu beat Ford Pirates from PE 16-0 in the first round of the Mainstay Cup. Archie Hadebe scores five. Goalkeeper Paddy Leering scores with a late penalty.

SEPTEMBER 6 Sundowns coach Stan Tshabalala attacks a fan who had been hurling abuse at him after a 0-0 draw with Wits.

SEPTEMBER 7 Basil Steenkamp scores a hat-trick on his debut for Pirates as they come from 0-2 down to beat Callies in Atteridgville.

SEPTEMBER 12 Shane MacGregor *(right)* of Rangers scores twice against Cosmos to join Calvin Petersen (Bush Bucks) and Trevor Poole (Arcadia) at the top of the scoring charts on 17 goals.

SEPTEMBER 13 Joel Mnini returns to the Swallows' line-up after two years in the NPSL, coming on as a substitute in the 1-1 draw with Pirates in Orlando.

SEPTEMBER 15 Atteridgeville Super Stadium is closed by the NSL after Callies supporters disrupt a game between Arcadia and Durban Bush Bucks. On transfer deadline day, Swallows sign Goodman Hlongwane from Tladi Morning Stars, Sundowns buy Vincent Makroti and Joseph 'Ace' Phatedi, Wits sign Peter Gordon from Aces while Calvin Petersen leaves Bucks to join Eissenstadt in Austria.

SEPTEMBER 23 Sundowns have their application to play matches at Pretoria's Loftus Versfeld turned down by the Pretoria City Council and Northern Transvaal Rugby Union.

SEPTEMBER 24 Klerksdorp City hire Walter Rautmann as coach.

SEPTEMBER 29 Zola Mahobe says Sundowns is for sale at R300 000 following increasing pressure from fans, who want coach Tshabalala out.

OCTOBER 4 Defending champions Bush Bucks move into second place, beating local rivals Durban City 1-0.

OCTOBER 7 Ernest Chirwali of Celtic returns to Europe for more trials, while Ace Ntsoelengoe returns from a season in Canada to play for Chiefs.

OCTOBER 22 Chiefs beat second-placed Bush Bucks 2-0 at Ellis Park with goals from Ntsoelengoe and Abel Shongwe.



OCTOBER 24 Pretoria Callies players refuse to honour their match against Durban City because of unpaid salaries.

OCTOBER 26 Rangers just need one more point to win the title after beating African Wanderers 2-1 away. Pirates beat Swallows 4-2 in a thrilling encounter at George Goch with Nick Seshweni getting three for Bucs and Thomas Hlongwane three for the losers – his third hat-trick of the season.

OCTOBER 27 Harris 'TV4' Chueu returns home after unsuccessful trials in Austria and Belgium.

OCTOBER 31 Rangers hammer AmaZulu 4-0 at the Rand to win the League for the first time. Two goals come from Shane MacGregor. Pretoria Callies sue the NSL for unpaid dues of R5 000, but lose their case in Pretoria Supreme Court, incurring costs of R15 000!

NOVEMBER 2 The long unbeaten League run of Witbank Aces, since Terry Paine took over as coach, comes to an end in Umlazi as Bush Bucks win 1-0.

NOVEMBER 9 Klerksdorp City are relegated after losing their last game 1-0 to Aces at Lynnville.

NOVEMBER 11 Andries Chitja is handed a six-month suspension for hitting referee David Nungu during a cup quarter-final tie with Chiefs.

NOVEMBER 18 Callies are relegated after losing 6-1 to Swallows.

SAMUEL SHIVAMBU/BACKPAGEPIX(1)/GAVIN BARKER/GALLO IMAGES(1)/GALLO IMAGES(1)/ANESH DEBIKY/GALLO IMAGES(1)/SAMUEL SHIVAMBU/BACKPAGEPIX(1)/MARK GLEESON/GALLO IMAGES(1)

YOUNG BUCS I

Orlando Pirates have added fuel to their continuity fire with rising stars **Gift Motupa** and **Menzi Masuku.** By Zola Doda.



GIFT MOTUPA

It was a case of baptism by fire for Orlando Pirates midfielder Gift Motupa, whose first match for the Buccaneers was the crunch second leg CAF Confederation Cup semi-final against Etoile du Sahel.

PIRATES lost that match 1-0, and 2-1 on aggregate, but for 21-year-old Motupa, it is a moment he will cherish for the rest of his career.

"When I signed for Pirates, I didn't think that I was going to start my first match in a cup final," Motupa says. "We lost, but it was a great experience. There's not too much time to think on the ball in CAF matches, but I was not intimidated. At the end I was happy with how I played."

Immediately after the match in Tunisia, Motupa and teammate Menzi Masuku jetted to Senegal to join the South African Under-23 side at the U-23 Africa Cup of Nations.

The duo landed in Dakar just hours before Amaglug-glug's must-win match against Zambia – three days earlier Owen da Gama's side had lost 3-1 against the host nation. And the Pirates duo shone, providing three goals between them in a 3-1 win – Masuku netted the opener, while Motupa netted a brace.

"It was difficult travelling to Senegal having lost a cup final," Motupa says. "But qualifying for the Olympics is also important. We arrived on Tuesday morning and played at 15h00. When we arrived we could see the morale was down after the opening loss, but we won and went on to qualify for the Olympics."

Motupa's road to the top flight started in his home province of Limpopo, with local team Manchester United.

He then joined Second Division side Baroka FC while in high school and got a taste of professional football when they reached the semi-finals of the Nedbank Cup, beating Kaizer Chiefs and Moroka Swallows along the way.

"Playing for Baroka in the Nedbank Cup was a dream come true. We didn't believe we could beat Chiefs, but we did believe we could beat Swallows. After that I had a belief that one day I would play professional football and that I would get offers," he says.

"And then I received an offer from Orlando Pirates. There were also offers from University of Pretoria and Mamelodi Sundowns, but I chose Pirates as I grew up supporting them."

After returning from the Under-23 Nations Cup, Motupa started against Sundowns and AmaTuks, although since then he's come on four times off the bench, and has yet to contribute a goal or assist. He remains optimistic that Pirates can still rescue their poor domestic season.

"We are trying to get consistent results, but we miss chances and opponents score against us. We don't capitalise, but it's something we must work on."

PICTURES BY BACKPAGEPIX 2015 (1)

N THE MAKING



MENZI MASUKU

With Orlando Pirates leading SuperSport United 2-1 during a League match in April 2014, Masuku receives a pass near the centreline facing his own goal. The speedy winger spins away from his marker, enters the SuperSport half and cuts inside. 25 meters away from goal, it's click-click-bang – the 22-year-old rifles a powerful shot into the back of the net, etching his name into Pirates folklore.

THAT outstanding strike won the Absa Premiership Goal of the Season and announced Masuku's arrival on the professional stage. But despite all the media attention, Masuku doesn't want this to define him as a player.

"After that goal most PSL players started to recognise who Menzi Masuku was, and I also played more for the first team, so it came at the right time," Masuku says.

"But that goal is not something I want to be remembered for – I don't want people to say, 'There's Masuku who scored the goal of the season'. There are so many things I would like to achieve in my career. And so far I think I'm on the right track. I've been playing well for my team and the national Under-23 team. So I am very happy with my progress."

After coming through the development ranks at Jomo Cosmos and Dynamos, the KwaMashu-born midfielder joined Pirates at the beginning of the 2014/15 season. While his namesake Khethokwakhe Masuku was dazzling Bucs fans in the senior team, Menzi was still honing his skills with the reserve team in the Multichoice Diski Challenge. Here he won two Man of the Match awards before making his senior debut in November 2014 against SuperSport.

The Diski Challenge has breathed new life into the Reserve League, and Masuku believes the tournament is a great stepping-stone: "I don't think people realise how important the Diski Challenge is, the entire PSL is benefiting from it. Youngsters can gain valuable experience before graduating to the PSL," he says.

In just his second professional season, Masuku is already a key player at Pirates, and he is proving the same in Owen da Gama's Under-23 side that qualified for the 2016 Olympics in Brazil. But he admits he still has a lot to learn.

"Playing in the CAF Confederation Cup was great because it was a whole new experience. It's a more tactical game; it's allabout protecting the ball and playing more for the team," he says.

"It's also about working hard when you don't have the ball because if you don't do that you get punished. I also had to learn about adapting to playing in different conditions in a short space of time, and recovering very quickly because you play midweek here, and the weekend in a different country."

"We needed to rest and train properly and that is something the coach explained to us. I want to work hard and focus more on my game and listen to what the coach wants, and take advice from more experienced players. That will help me grow. I will also get a chance to represent my country at the Olympics in Brazil." KO

'BETTER THAN BENNI'

Bidvest Wits have picked up a gem in 18-year-old attacker **Phakamani Mahlambi,** who has taken the League by storm since making his debut in The Clever Boys' 2-1 Absa Premiership win over Ajax Cape Town in August. By Chad Klate.

Phakamani Mahlambi laid down an immediate marker in his first top-flight match as he came on to replace Bafana Bafana midfielder and former PSL Footballer of the Season Sibusiso Vilakazi in the 64th minute. Skipping past three defenders, Mahlambi teed up Mozambican teammate Elias Pelembe to tap home the winner for The Clever Boys.

The youngster then recorded five goals and three assists in his opening eight League appearances, with his contribution significant in keeping his side near the summit of the standings.

Originally a midfielder who was mostly used out wide, Mahlambi has now been converted to a forward by coach Gavin Hunt, who has gone as far as to compare the teenager to ex-Bafana Bafana great Benni McCarthy – proclaiming that Mahlambi possesses more natural ability than the now retired South African legend.

"I haven't seen a player so quick in a long time," Hunt said after his side's 1-0 victory over Orlando Pirates in October. "I hate making comparisons, but I had Benni at 17… this boy is better, I'm telling you.



"I'm going to try and change him, like I did with Benni, from a winger into a striker. I changed Benni into a striker and we all know what followed. I think this boy can be a striker and I think he's got the world at his feet. I haven't seen such natural ability for a long time."

Hunt's comments sent local bloggers on social platforms into a frenzy at the time, with some labeling the three-time Absa Premiership-winning coach 'a crazy madala'.

Wits have since curbed Mahlambi's media interaction in an effort to keep him focused, but in a rare interview following his standout performance in Wits' 3-1 League win over Jomo Cosmos, the soft-spoken forward said he was comfortable being converted from a midfielder into a frontman.

"I'm comfortable with anything, because the coach is the one who decides and not me," Mahlambi says. "I play for the sake of playing football, and the coach gives the instructions. I guess he was right to convert me to striker because I've performed so far in that position."

Wits have struggled with a lack of firepower upfront, with their ailing foreign trio Henrico Botes, Kris Bright and Joaquim Lupeta immersed in injury and fitness concerns. Mahlambi's timeous arrival on the scene has thus given Hunt brighter attacking options.

Mahlambi has also given national team coach Shakes Mashaba food for thought, as he usually opts for a mix of youth and experience in Bafana Bafana's front-line.

It came as no surprise that Mahlambi was recently included in Owen Da Gama's National Under-23 squad to compete at the 2015 CAF Under-23 Africa Cup of Nations in Senegal, with the likelihood that – barring injury or a severe dip in form – he will also take part in the Olympics in Brazil later this year.

Despite being among the youngest players at the junior Nations Cup, the Vryheid-born attacker started in all South Africa's group fixtures in Senegal, and played an impactful role in the team's progression to the semi-finals, before Algeria denied them a maiden CAF Under-23 Championship final berth.

"It was a great experience for me because it was my first tournament, and I think I gained a lot from my teammates and the coaches. I'm so happy about the qualification to the Olympics, and I think it's a good thing

PICTURES BY BACKPAGEPIX 2015 (1)/CARL FOURIE/GALLO IMAGES (1)

for us because we'll now have more opportunities to showcase our talents, which will give us the exposure needed to move abroad," Mahlambi says.

"I'd like to thank the coaches that believed in me and gave me the opportunity to play in my first international tournament. There were hiccups here and there, but I think I did well. I'm looking forward to hopefully going to Rio."

Less than six months after turning professional, Mahlambi has made steady progress and shown consistency that many before him have lacked.

"I think coach Hunt has done well for me to improve as a player and, in fact, with everything we have been doing in training up to now, I've seen an improvement in myself, so I look forward to working harder and giving back to him," he says.

Mahlambi has also set his sights on the senior national team: "Going forward, the focus is obviously Rio, and possibly to play for Bafana Bafana in the qualifiers for the World Cup as well."

Mahlambi graduated from the Safa-Transnet School of Excellence – the very same institution that produced Steven Pienaar, Gerald Sibeko, Dillon Sheppard, Bernard Parker and Daine Klate – where he received both his football and formal education for four years.

"I think [coach James Mabena] did well for me when I came here aged 13… the school developed me in such a way that I can see the improvement in myself. Coach James had a great impact on me, and I hope he'll help other players in the same way he helped me," Mahlambi says.

"I look up to the School of Excellence alumni – Steven Pienaar and all of them. I also want to reach that level and play abroad some day, hopefully in the near future." KO

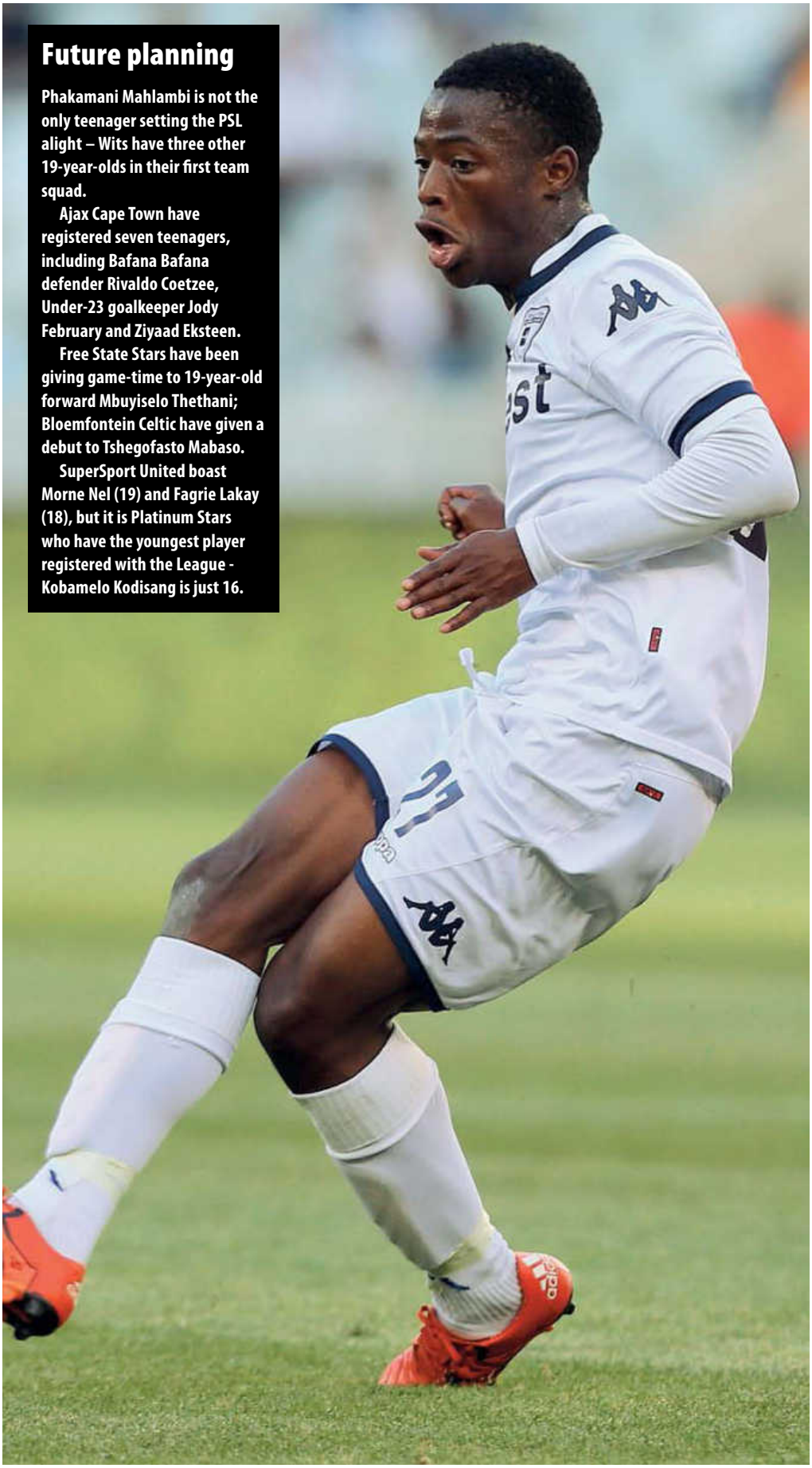
Future planning

Phakamani Mahlambi is not the only teenager setting the PSL alight – Wits have three other 19-year-olds in their first team squad.

Ajax Cape Town have registered seven teenagers, including Bafana Bafana defender Rivaldo Coetzee, Under-23 goalkeeper Jody February and Ziyaad Eksteen.

Free State Stars have been giving game-time to 19-year-old forward Mbuyiselo Thethani; Bloemfontein Celtic have given a debut to Tshegofasto Mabaso.

SuperSport United boast Morne Nel (19) and Fagrie Lakay (18), but it is Platinum Stars who have the youngest player registered with the League - Kobamelo Kodisang is just 16.



ALL ROADS LEAD

*Plans are taking shape for the Under-23s to shine at the **Rio Olympics**.*

BY ZOLA DODA



Africa's eyes will be on the South African Under-23 team when the Olympics begin in Brazil in August this year. The side qualified for the tournament by finishing third at the Nations Cup finals played in Senegal in December – one of the stepping stones in Safa's Vision 2022.

The last time AmaGlug-glug qualified for the Olympics was in 2000 when the games were held in Australia. Shakes Mashaba's side finished third in their group after losing 2-1 to both Japan and Slovakia – after beating Brazil 3-1. This time around coach Owen da Gama will be hoping to go one step further.

"It was not easy to qualify and I expected the tournament in Senegal to be tough, Da Gama says. "We knew we didn't have all the preparations we should have had and after speaking to Nigerian coach Samson Siasia it was evident that they had a better build-up. But despite that we performed well and I was happy.

"We could have done better and some players were not at their best because it was their first time spending so long in camp. Considering all that, we went there to qualify and that is what we did. This achievement puts the country in a good mood and I'm happy for the players – they deserve this achievement.

"Now our target is to go past the group stages in Brazil. The important thing is to have an achievable target and anything beyond that will be a bonus."

South Africa's Class of 2000 began their journey at Under-17 level before graduating to the Under-20s – a side which finished runners-up at the African Youth Championships in 1997 in Morocco and qualified for the Under-20 World Cup in Malaysia later that year.

Three years later, led by Matthew Booth, AmaGlug-glug reached the Olympics.

Unlike the Class of 2000, Da Gama's team has not been together for a very long time, but Booth believes that will not be a stumbling block.

"With us it was almost a six-year journey and by the time we reached the Olympics we knew each other very well," Booth says.

"Even before the African Youth Championships we were a formidable team and we were strengthened by travels around the world. We experienced every continent; just the travelling alone made us stronger. And that helped create a special bond amongst players.

"After we qualified we didn't have to do lots of preparations and that was the benefit. We were together for only two to three weeks for our qualifiers.

"The Olympics itself made us special, but it's a pity we didn't go through to the next stage and I hope the current generation will go further than us," Booth says.

"The current team is good and I was very impressed when I first saw them – and fortunately for them the big difference is that the PSL and Safa has allowed clubs to release players. That allowed Owen da Gama to pick the best players."

With less than seven months before the tournament kicks off in Brazil, Da Gama admits that he has his work cut out as far as the preparations are concerned.

Unlike the Fifa World Cup, Under-20 and Under-17 World Cups, the Olympics do not fall in the Fifa calendar and clubs are not obliged to release players for qualifiers or friendly matches. But previously – as was the case for London 2012 Olympics – Fifa has insisted that clubs release players for the tournament itself.

While Da Gama will be able to get the players on Fifa international weeks, he faces difficulties in organising training camps. But he says he has

Qualified teams

Africa:
Algeria
Nigeria
South Africa

Europe:
Denmark
Germany
Portugal
Sweden

Concacaf:
Honduras
Mexico

Oceania:
Fiji

Americas:
Argentina
Brazil
**Colombia in play-offs with USA*

Asia:
Three teams to be decided in January

PICTURES BY BACKPAGEPIX 2015(1)

TO RIO ...



already made plans which will have all his players participating fully.

"We are busy having meetings about this. The good thing is that we know during the Fifa dates we are guaranteed to get the best players – unless they are playing for Bafana Bafana.

"We are also busy lining up a number of friendlies. In May we are going to a tournament in Europe and after that we will try and organise a short camp and then allow the players to rest before we go to the tournament itself.

"I've been in touch with Europe-based Lebogang Phiri and Lobogang Mothiba. They have been part of the team, but we could not have them in Senegal because the tournament was not a Fifa date. We are also monitoring other players.

"It's a long way to go before Rio and we need to strategise. The PSL has been good to us as well and we could not have qualified if it wasn't for their help."

Da Gama will be able to select three over-age players as per the rules – but says he will only decide names later.

"It's important we select them because all the teams will utilise over age players. It's something I need to discuss with the rest of the technical team, technical director and CEO," he says. KO

"The PSL has been good to us and we could not have qualified if it wasn't for their help."

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Sedgwick's
100 Years of the Original

36



Alvaro Morata (Juventus)
Morata hit fine form in his first season with Juventus, netting 15 goals. The pacey striker scored in both legs of the Champions League semi-final to eliminate his former team Real Madrid, and got on the scoresheet in the Final as well. The 23-year-old has but a handful of caps for Spain, but could be a key figure during the Euros in June.

35



Blaise Matuidi (PSG)
The engine-room in the Ligue 1 champion's midfield, Matuidi made 54 appearances for PSG last season. An excellent reader of the game, the 28-year-old is often chief-destroyer of opponents' attacks, and the linchpin going forward. Voted 2015 French Player of the Year by *France Football*, he was handed the armband for France's friendly against Denmark in October.

34



Giorgio Chiellini (Juventus)
Chiellini is a mainstay for at the back for both club and country, a fearless defender who couples tough-tackling with intelligent reading of the game. His centre-back pairing with international teammate Leonardo Bonucci helped Juventus to the Double last season and the 31-year-old with over 80 international caps will be a key figure in the 2016 European Championships for the Azzurri.

33



David Silva
The mercurial little Spaniard has been instrumental for Manchester City over the past three seasons, and although this season has been tougher for him, Silva remains a key figure in midfield, exhibiting vision and guile. Averaging an assist every three games for the Citizens, the 30-year-old is targeting a third Premier League title in his sixth year at the Etihad.

32



Javier Mascherano
Once a tough but raw midfield hatchet-man at Liverpool, Mascherano blossomed into an accomplished central defender at Barcelona, combining excellent positional play with his trademark tackling ability. A vital cog in the heart of the Catalan defence in their trophy-laden 2015 season, Mascherano was shortlisted as one of six Barca players in the 23 nominees for the 2015 Ballon d'Or.

31



Willian (Chelsea)
Chelsea's best player this season, Willian is different to most other Brazilian wide midfielders, offering workrate and positional discipline to complement his ball skills, pace and vision. A dead-ball specialist, he has a knack for scoring long-range stunners – seven of his eight goals by the turn of the year came from outside the box. The 27-year-old has 32 caps for the Selecao.

30



Toni Kroos (Real Madrid)
Kroos does the oft-ignored dirty work in the middle of the park for star-studded Real Madrid. He missed just four games across all competitions in 2014/15 and was the side's second-best assister at the end of the year. A mainstay in the German national team, Kroos completed the most passes in the Euro 2016 qualifiers – 1 007 – as Die Mannschaft finished top of their group.

29



Karim Benzema (Real Madrid)
The spearhead of the potent 'BBC' attack, Benzema is a proven goalscorer who exhibits superb movement and vision and despite Real Madrid's barren 2015, scored a goal every two games and contributed 15 assists. The French international hit a brace in Zinedine Zidane's first match in charge to make it 18 goals in 18 games this season, taking his Galacticos tally to 150 goals in 299.

THE TOP 20 AFRICANS

Our continent continues to launch exciting footballers onto the world stage each year. Based on current form and undiminished class, these are the top 20 African footballers in the world.



20 Dieumerci Mbokani
The powerful 30-year-old former TP Mazembe striker is currently on loan at Norwich City from Dynamo Kiev. The Canaries are banking on him to continue to show the form that earned him four championship medals in Belgium.

19 Michael Essien
The Chelsea and Ghana legend has become something of a forgotten man as age catches up with him and injuries slow him down, but he has been earning rave reviews at Panathinaikos in Greece of late.

18 Victor Wanyama
The Kenyan national captain's form has slipped a little as Southampton struggle this season, but the powerfully-built 24-year-old remains a dependable and solid defensive midfielder.

17 Vincent Enyeama
Enyeama's fortunes have dipped this season and he has retired from the Nigerian national team, but less than a year ago he was still considered one of the best goalkeepers in France, and on the continent. Form is temporary, class is permanent ...

16 Sofiane Feghouli
Valencia winger Feghouli has twice been named Algeria Player of the Year and is approaching 150 La Liga appearances. He was shortlisted for CAF's Player of the Year and this season's form has made him a transfer target of Manchester United.

15 Ahmed Musa
Nigeria's new national captain is a tiny attacker with a big heart who made headlines

IN THE WORLD TODAY



Mighty Elephants – Yaya Toure, Serge Aurier and Gervinho celebrate

with a brace against Argentina in the 2014 World Cup. Comfortable on either wing or down the middle, he is a key player for top Russian outfit, CSKA Moscow.

14 Didier Drogba
Africa's greatest striker of the 21st century now plays in the MLS 'retirement league' – but he remains a fearsome goal threat and many top clubs would be happy to call on the Chelsea legend's services.

13 Yannick Bolassie
The French-born DRC international is the master of the unpredictable, playing with a free-wheeling style that has English Premiership defenders back-pedaling and Crystal Palace fans drooling. It is no coincidence that when Bolassie has been out injured, the Eagles have found it almost impossible to get goals.

12 Sadio Mane
Like Wanyama, Mane has endured a difficult season with Southampton but the Saints rate their Senegalese winger sufficiently to have blocked Manchester United's efforts to sign him. He was on the shortlist for CAF's Player of the Year award.

11 Mohamed Salah
Egypt winger Mohamed Salah is Egypt's 2015 Player of the Year and was shortlisted for CAF's main award too. After an unhappy time at Chelsea he is proving to be an astute signing by Roma.

10 Gervinho
Gervais Yaho Kouassi was discarded by Arsenal – but moving to Serie A was the best thing he could have done and he has been a star at Roma ever since. Known to all as Gervinho, the pacy attacker was one of the stars of Ivory Coast's Afcon success last year.

09 Aymen Abdennour
Abdennour is not widely known outside of France – where he starred for Monaco – and Spain, where he stars for Valencia, but the scouts of mega-rich Chelsea admire him. The reigning English champions tried to buy the left-sided centre-back last year as a replacement for John Terry. The tall Tunisian was on the shortlist for CAF's Player of the Year.

08 Yacine Brahimi
Super-skilled Algerian winger Yacine Brahimi has been in hot form for Porto, baffling defenders with his unpredictable style and technical excellence. Another on the CAF shortlist, he was 2014's BBC African footballer of the Year.

07 Mehdi Benatia
The Bayern Munich and Morocco centre-back honed his defensive capabilities in Serie A and has been linked with a move to La Liga and the English Premiership, proof of the appreciation of his talents across Europe's major leagues.

06 Odion Ighalo
The 26-year-old Nigerian striker has been operating under the radar after years struggling to break through in Italy. But this season he has shocked English Premiership defenders with newly promoted Watford as he vies with Jamie Vardy and Romelu Lukaku for headlines thanks to his goals. Built in the mould of past Super Eagles greats who have led the line, Ighalo is a star in the making.

04



03



01



05 Serge Aurier
The powerfully-built right-wingback was one of the Ivory coast's most influential players as they won the 2015 Afcon, marauding down the flank to spark attacks, and unsettling opponents with powerhouse tackles. This is the sort of stuff the 23-year-old is showing increasingly for French super-club PSG, making him Africa's most exciting defender.

04 Andre Ayew
The son of the legendary Abedi Pele is making his own legend in his first season in the English Premiership after years of consistent excellence at Marseille in France. While the Swans flounder about near the relegation zone this season, Andre Ayew has been their one bright spark showing sublime skills, tenacity and an eye for goals. He was also Ghana's inspiration as the Black Stars reached the 2015 Afcon Final.

03 Riyad Mahrez
How many footballer fans gave Leicester a second glance a year ago? And how many knew anything about Riyad Mahrez? Sure, the Algerian international midfielder was amongst Leicester's more accomplished players, but with the Foxes staring relegation in the face, Mahrez wasn't in the headlines. Everyone knows the 24-year-old now as his class and quick-thinking complements Jamie Vardy's pace, power and dogged pursuit of goals.

02 Yaya Toure
For the past five years, Yaya has been the giant of giants among African footballers. And many days, he is still the best of the best, his ability to combine silken sophistication with raw unadulterated power makes him an irresistible force for Manchester City and Ivory Coast. But there have also been days when Toure has been way below his best, seemingly disinterested. Still, his year has been good enough to see him crowned BBC African Footballer of the Year, although he was pipped to the CAF title – much to his chagrin.

01 Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang
Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, take a bow. CAF's African Footballer of the Year is, right now, the best African footballer on the planet. A relative unknown when he joined Borussia Dortmund in 2013, he is now the talk of Europe, averaging almost a goal a game in the Bundesliga this season and maintaining a high standard for the Gabonese national team too.

JUST MISSING OUT

Seydou Keita – La Liga and Mali veteran, now with AS Roma.
Islam Slimani – Algerian striker who has been linked with Manchester United.
Kwadwo Asamoah – Twice-Ghana Player of the Year whose past 18 months at Juventus have been wrecked by injury.


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STEVE IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Can **Steve Komphela** redeem this season for Kaizer Chiefs? And how does he compare to past Chiefs coaches in their first six months in charge?

BY LOVEMORE MOYO

Steve Komphela has come in for considerable criticism for failing to win any silverware during his first six months as Kaizer Chiefs coach, despite reaching two cup finals.

Komphela did well to reach the MTN8 and Telkom Knock-out Finals, but losing both set a new precedent – Chiefs had never lost two finals in a row during the PSL era.

Giving weight to the doubts about the former Bafana Bafana captain is Amakhosi's League form,which has not been convincing: though they had only lost once before Christmas, the Glamour Boys had drawn half of the dozen matches that they had played.

The question now is whether or not Komphela can redeem this season for the country's most popular club.

Winning silverware is the only measure of success and the 48-year-old knows that all too well from his time as a Chiefs player. It is a desirable, yet immensely stressful job, especially if silverware is not forthcoming. And because he is a local coach – unlike all Chiefs' coaches who preceded him, who all had European backgrounds – and has yet to win anything, Komphela still has to win the hearts of those with reservations.

The PSL's inaugural season in 1996/97 saw Walter da Silva and Wellington Manyathi in charge, and Yugoslav-born Paul Dolezar was the first Chiefs coach to be handed the sole responsibility for the following campaign. By Christmas he had won the Rothmans Cup after overcoming Mamelodi Sundowns on penalties in a replayed final. In the League he had won seven, drawn five and lost twice in the 14 matches that had been played, and Chiefs eventually finished second, five points behind champions Sundowns.



Dolezar ***(left)*** resigned after two years in charge, announcing his departure for Sundowns during the pre-season Vodacom Challenge in July 1999.

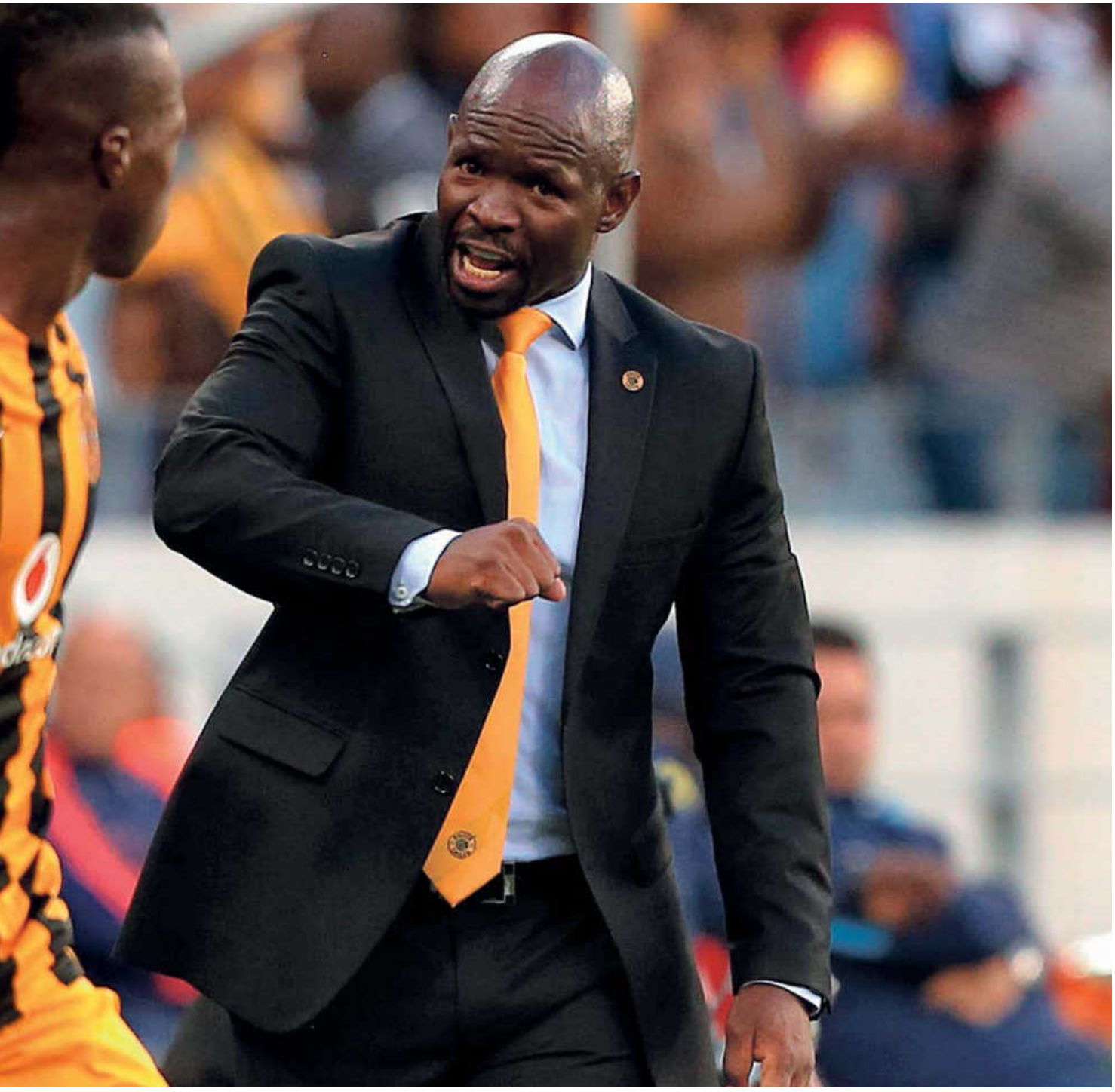
Kaizer Motaung wasn't impressed that the League title had not been won, with Amakhosi finishing second in both seasons that Dolezar was in charge.

Turkish-born Muhsin Ertugral ***(right)*** then took over at the start of the 1999/2000 season. Heading into the new year in his first year in charge, Ertugral was already out of the Rothmans Cup, having lost to Hellenic in the first round.

Jacob Sephooa had started off in charge for the first five League matches while Ertugral awaited his work-permit – Sephooa won two of those matches and drew three.



When Ertugral eventually took charge, he won eight,



drew four and lost four of the 16 matches before Christmas, but notably lost to both Orlando Pirates and Sundowns. He eventually led Amakhosi to third place that season, a massive 15 points behind winners Sundowns.

Ertugral did, however, win the BobSave Super Bowl in the second half of the campaign.

A few months into his fourth season and after landing another three trophies – including the Mandela Cup – Ertugral was eased out, being placed on indefinite leave following a slow start to the 2002/03 season in which he lost three, drew one and won just one match.

His issues were compounded by his failure to finish in the top eight the previous year.

Doctor Khumalo and Ace Khuse then took over as co-coaches.

Ertugral's departure saw the appointment of Ted Dumitru ***(right)*** at the start of the 2003/04 season. It wasn't the Romanian's first spell in charge, having been at the helm in 1987, but it was his debut season in the PSL era.

At Christmas the veteran coach had led Chiefs to Coca-Cola Cup success, beating Silver Stars in the Final, but had been knocked out in the quarter-finals of the SAA Supa 8.



In the League Chiefs were sitting at the top going into the new

Komphela's first six months in charge

League			
09/08/15	Chippa United	0-0	A
22/08/15	Free State Stars	4-0	H
25/08/15	Polokwane City	1-1	A
12/09/15	SuperSport United	4-1	A
23/09/15	University of Pretoria	1-1	H
26/09/15	Ajax Cape Town	1-1	A
20/10/15	Jomo Cosmos	0-0	A
27/10/15	Mpumalanga Black Aces	1-0	H
31/10/15	Orlando Pirates	1-3	H
03/11/15	Golden Arrows	3-1	H
21/11/15	Maritzburg United	1-1	A
19/12/15	Bidvest Wits	2-1	H
MTN8			
05/08/15	Maritzburg United (after extra-time)	5-3	H
16/08/15	Bloemfontein Celtic	1-1	A
29/08/15	Bloemfontein Celtic	1-0	H
19/09/15	Ajax Cape Town	0-1	N
Telkom Knockout			
24/10/15	Mpumalanga Black Aces	2-1	A
07/11/15	Orlando Pirates (won 6-5 on penalties)	0-0	H
16/12/15	Mamelodi Sundowns	1-3	N



"Winning should be dressed sensibly"

Steve Komphela feels he has the squad to win the League and Nedbank Cup – and all the while playing with style.

"Our winning should not be naked," Komphela says. "Our winning should be dressed sensibly; a win that pleases the eye. It's a show, and people have to enjoy the show.

"I think stats sum everything up. We have been to two cup finals ... with Chiefs, you can go there but if you don't bring it home, then it's not enough.

"However, if you were to fast-forward and look back after success, you would say these were movements towards success, if we succeed. If I was to die tomorrow, they will say, 'We hope this guy was going to do something good'. So the two finals will only dictate when we reach the future to determine if it was a step towards, or if that was the ultimate, success.

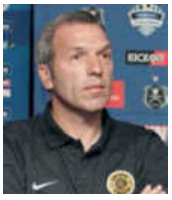
"In terms of the League, we are three points away from our target, five points away from the leaders, second best defence, second best offense ... that says it all. We have to keep on working because nothing has been achieved just yet. The Nedbank Cup and the League is still there for the taking, so we have to fight for both."

"And with regard to rotation of players, we acknowledge that not everybody at Naturena has been used so you don't just have to be drastic and make changes.

"If you bring in a striker what are going to do to Ndulula? Did you do any justice to Zulu? Inasmuch as you don't want to waste time, you must acknowledge the fact that you haven't used them."

year, having won nine, drawn three and lost once. They went on to win the League that season.

Dumitru stayed on for the next season, but resigned after two titles and taking over as Bafana Bafana interim coach towards the end of 2005 after Stuart Baxter had resigned.



German Ernst Middendorp arrived at the start of the 2005/06 season, and by Christmas Chiefs had been booted out of the SAA Supa 8 in the quarter-finals by Bloemfontein Celtic and had lost to Jomo Cosmos in the second round of the Coca-Cola Cup.

Though they eventually finished third in the League, they had won seven, drawn 11 and lost once in the 19 matches they had played going into the new year.

Concerns were raised about the high number of draws, with many believing the stalemates were spoiling their title challenge, which eventually saw them finish seven points behind winners Sundowns. However, Chiefs did win the Absa Cup at the end of that season.

With Chiefs falling out of the title race the following season (2006/07) as early as February and then being knocked out in the first round of the Absa Cup, Middendorp ***(left)*** was axed in March 2007. With the damage already done, Amakhosi ended the season in ninth. He had, however, won the SAA Supa 8 earlier on that season.



Temperamental Turk Ertugral returned for most of the next two years, but was replaced in the winter of 2009 by Vladimir Vermezovic ***(above)***. The Serbian had a discouraging start in that truncated League season, with four defeats in his first seven matches. Chiefs eventually ended the year with 12 wins, five draws and seven defeats, and went on to finish third.

At Christmas 'VV' was out of the MTN8, having lost to Ajax Cape Town in the semi-finals, but was able to salvage some pride by winning the Telkom Knockout.

He again won the Telkom Knockout in his second season, but was then fired in his third season with seven League fixtures remaining. Chiefs finished that 2011/12 campaign without winning a trophy for the first time in nine years.

Baxter ***(right)*** came in at the start of the 2012/13 season and had a horror start, being massacred by Mamelodi Sundowns in the first round of the MTN8 and exiting the Telkom Knockout in the first round.

He was, however, pocketing points in the League, having accumulated 35 from 16 matches at the festive break as he worked his way towards the title in his debut season. He also completed the double by adding the Nedbank Cup.

The Englishman won the double again in his last season in charge at Naturena, but left for a job at Genclerbirligi in Turkey, which he ironically lost after just two matches.



Club boss Motaung then made a brave decision in getting a local coach to take over from the successful Baxter. Komphela has since reached two finals, but lost both. Chiefs went into the Christmas break in fourth spot, five points behind leaders Bidvest Wits.

They are very aware that they need to offer more resistance and throw harder punches during the second half of the season to make sure that the championship trophy remains at Naturena.

The Nedbank Cup will also be a must-win if Komphela is to win more sympathisers and extend his stay at the club.

And with a squad whose influential players Siboniso Gaxa, Morgan Gould, Tsepo Masilela, Reneilwe Letsholonyane and Siphiwe Tshabalala are all past their 30th birthdays, Komphela knows he needs to introduce younger and fresher blood into the team – soon. KO

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CLEVER MOVE SOUTH

Thirteen clubs in 14 years is some journey. But Englishman **James Keene** has good reasons for moving to Bidvest Wits. Lovemore Moyo spends an afternoon with the Clever Boys' newest striker.

At the beginning of last year, Kaizer Chiefs fans will remember an unfamiliar Englishman being touted as Kingston Nkhatha's replacement. In the end he wasn't signed, but James Keene is now back in South Africa after joining League leaders Bidvest Wits in January.

Born in Somerset in England's south west, the 30-year-old broke into the professional ranks at then-English Premier League club Portsmouth in 2004, having graduated from the club's academy.

He then went on loan spells at Kidderminster Harriers, Bournemouth, Boston United and GAIS in Sweden, before being bought outright by another Swedish club IF Elfsborg, where he was a regular. He also spent loan time at Fredrikstad FK in Norway, Djurgadens IF (Sweden) and Portsmouth in League Two.

In September 2014 he moved to Israeli club Bnei Yehuda, followed by the unusual step of moving to Indian Super League outfit North East United. And in April 2015 he made a move back to join Halmstads BK, where he was teammates with ex-Chiefs forward Matthew Rusike. In total, the striker was most prolific during his stints in Sweden, scoring 38 goals in 171 appearances in Sweden's top-flight over a period of nine seasons.

His journeys have certainly been extensive, but despite the mix of leagues he's competed in, Keene



has also played in Europe's premier continental club competitions – the Uefa Champions League and the Europa League, which he did while at Elfsborg.

Now in the twilight of his career, the striker has made the move south, while most in South Africa aim for exactly the opposite.

Will he fit in with coach Gavin Hunt's plans?

"Absolutely," Keene says. "I have already watched a couple of matches and I played a few friendlies which went well, before making my debut against Chippa United. The way the coach wants to play football works well for me. The fantastic players that I will have around me will make my job much easier because of the quality of balls that will be coming in.

"I think this club suits me well because I am a big team player. I will create, I will take away players for

KEENE QUOTES

BAXTER'S ADVICE

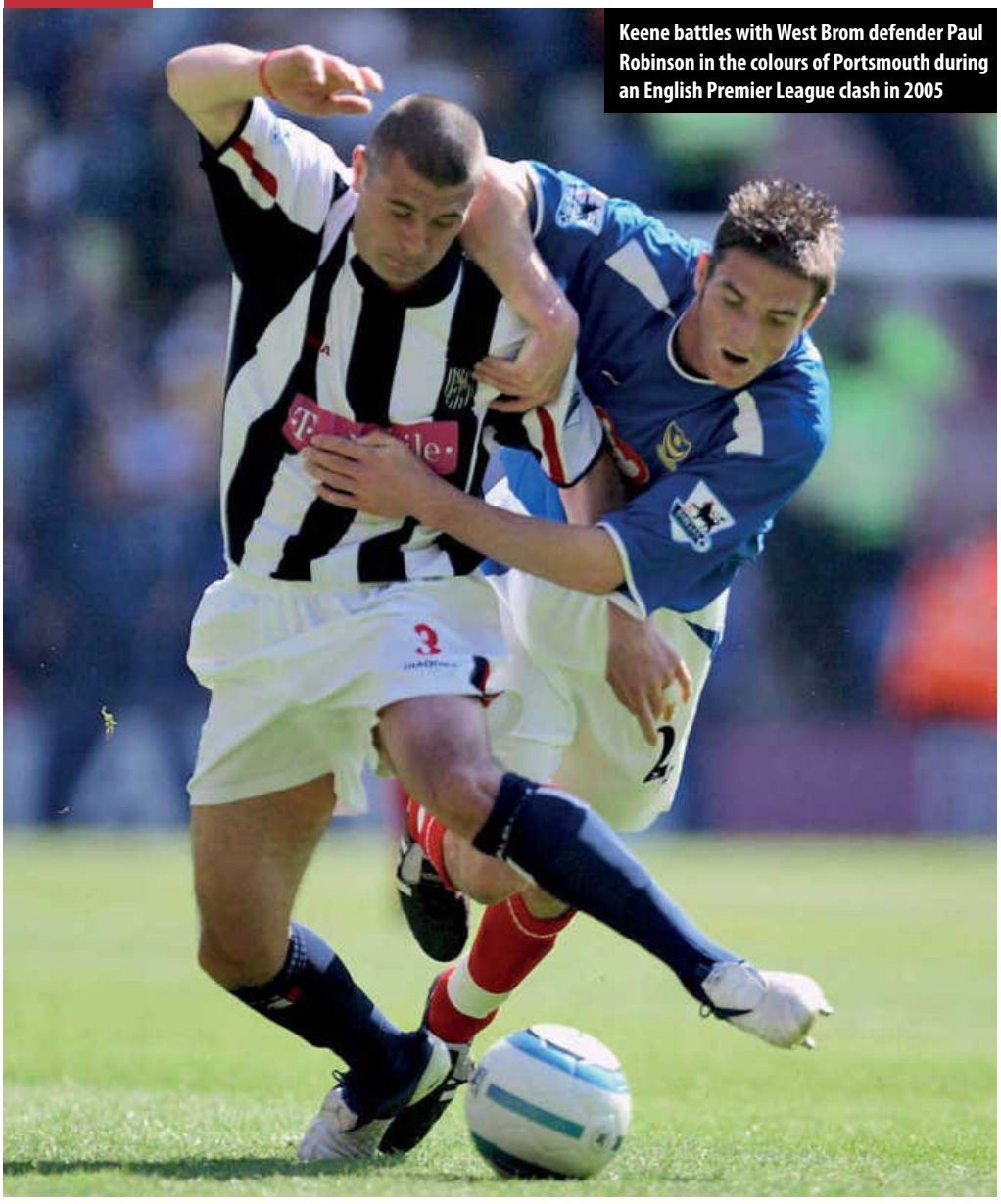
"Stuart brought me to Chiefs and although things eventually didn't work out, I spoke to him about Wits and he spoke highly of the club, saying that he likes the way Gavin works and the way his team plays."

THE PSL HAS TALENT!

"What players here can do with the ball is frightening and incredible. You watch the young lads playing with the ball and you smile because they are so good. The English game is so different in that you kick the ball, play it easy, get it back and then get into the box – here they want flair which is great fun."

INDIAN ADVENTURE

"It was an incredible experience playing before such huge crowds of 50 000," Keene says of his time spent with NorthEast United in the Indian Premier League. "Travelling was hectic because there are so many people – just getting to training could take two hours for a journey that should normally take just 15 minutes."



Keene battles with West Brom defender Paul Robinson in the colours of Portsmouth during an English Premier League clash in 2005

DID YOU KNOW?

JAMES Keene played cricket for England Under-16s, and still enjoys time with ball and bat, as well as the odd round of golf.
He is fluent in Swedish, having played in the country early in his career. His Swedish wife Catrine joined him in Johannesburg after he signed for Wits.

Full name: James Keene
Born: 26/12/85 in Wells, England
PSL debut: Chippa Utd 1 Bidvest Wits 3 (10/1/16)
First goal: Chippa Utd 1 Bidvest Wits 3 (10/1/16)

SEASON	CLUB	GAMES	GLS
04/05	Kidderminster (Eng. League 2)	5	0
	Portsmouth (Prem)	2	0
05/06	Bournemouth (League 1)	6 (+5 subs)	2
	Boston Utd (League 2)	6	0
	Goteborg (Swe)	10	4
06/07	Elfsborg (Swe)	15 (+10 subs)	5
07/08	Elfsborg	15 (+6 subs)	5
08/09	Elfsborg	25 (+5 subs)	8
09/10	Elfsborg	19 (+12 subs)	6
10/11	Elfsborg	7 (+15 subs)	3
	Fredrikstad (Nor)	6 (+4 subs)	2
11/12	Elfsborg	2 (+2 subs)	1
	Djurgardens (Swe)	22 (+5 subs)	6
12/13	Elfsborg	12 (+12 subs)	5
	Portsmouth	6 (+3 subs)	1
13/14	Elfsborg	5 (+4 subs)	1
	Bnei Yehuda (Isr)	12 (+2 subs)	2
14/15	Halmstads (Swe)	21 (+1 sub)	4
	NorthEast Utd (Ind)	6 (+4 subs)	0
15/16	Bidvest Wits	1	1
Totals:		**203**	**56**

Correct as at 15/01/2016. League and cup matches only. Friendlies and charity games not included.

my teammates to score and I will tackle someone so that my teammate can get the ball and score. I do a lot off the ball that people who don't understand might not see, but people who know football will realise the job that I do," he says.

Keene, who has signed on a short-team deal running until the end of the season (with an option), hopes to help Wits claim their first-ever PSL title by the time his current contract expires.

"The club has ambitions to win the League. Where we are on the table right now, you don't get that from being an average side, but you have to win games … we just need continuation until the end of the season," Keene continues.

"I think the squad has been strengthened well enough, and it would be great for me to win the League with Wits within six months of my arrival – I want to contribute by way of goals and assists."

What specifically made him choose South Africa as his next destination?

"I had options in Sweden, but I wanted something different," he says. "Not many players do it, but why shouldn't I do it? This is a good club which wants to win things and wants to do well. After speaking to Gavin and Jose [Ferreira] I got a good feeling about being here.

"I have played in Europe for a very long time and have made a good name for myself there, especially in Sweden. I have also played in Israel and I was in the Indian Super League, which was a fantastic experience. I wanted a new kick, I wanted a new drive and I want to win things. After speaking to people at the club I wanted to come here and experience South Africa.

"I had a contract at Elfsborg for six years and I could have stayed there for all my career and never get to experience anything else.

"I would have played the same football and lived in the same place my whole life. I am young and I want to experience things and with football I think you become a better player the more you travel as you get to experience different styles," he explains.

With his better half already here and smiles all over the dressing-room as Wits continue to dominate in the League, Keene looks well set to enjoy his time in South Africa. KO

PICTURES BY RICHARD HUGGARD/GALLO IMAGES (1)/JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES (1)



BE NEGAPOSITIVE

The campaign to raise awareness around HIV testing in South Africa has received a boost from Soweto homeboy and new acting talent and musician Bongani Nkosi.

The Brothers for Life campaign, which encourages South Africans to test for HIV and know their status, has launched the Negapositive campaign, with Nkosi taking the lead role as the character Mindlos.

KICK OFF: Bongani, congratulations on this role. Tell us more about yourself ...

BONGANI NKOSI: I'm a passionate South African, who loves music and have recently joined an acting agency. I'm also very involved with game changers in my neighbourhood, helping families who are struggling with food, HIV issues and drug abuse. This ad merges my love for show business with my commitment to change in my community and beyond.

What role does the character Mindlos play in this campaign?

Mindlos is a taxi driver, and he is real. I am certain that he will inspire men to test, and to commit to their own and their partners' health. I am also working on some new music to spread the message and motivate people to test.

The campaign is centered around 'Negapositive'. Can you elaborate?

Negapositive is a new word Brothers for Life are using to remind South Africans that we are all in this together. We must all know our status, take responsibility for our health, protect our partners, and treat each other with care and respect. Negapositive means if you are negative, make a commitment to stay that way: condomise, and stick to one partner. If you are positive, start treatment when the doctors advise you to and stay healthy. You are the same person either way. You can live your life. We want to end stigma, so the audience must decide for themselves if Mindlos is negative or positive. He is a happy, healthy guy because he knows his status and makes the right choices. His status is his own business. It does not define him.

There is research that suggests men in particular are afraid of being tested. What advice have you got to help them?

Understand what you are afraid of and face your fear. You have to know your status. Don't wait. My own brother went for a while without getting tested; by the time he did get tested he was very sick. My family supported him and now he is strong, but we went through a tough time. Knowledge is power: the sooner you know, the sooner you can get the proper attention and medication. And remember: don't let the fear of positive diagnoses stop you testing, because you may be surprised. Over 80 percent of South Africans are negative. KO

To find out more about the Negapositive campaign, visit brothersforlife.mobi

To find a testing clinic or support group near you, visit www.healthsites.org.za, dial *120* 662#, or call the National AIDS helpline 0800 012 322 (toll free)

If you have any questions about HIV, go to Brothers for Life on Facebook www.facebook.com/BrothersforlifeSA or Twitter @BrothersSA pages and ask Dr Sivu.

Check out the Negapositive advert here!

THE COMEBACK KID

Considered down and out six months ago after starting just a single game last term, **Wayne Arendse** has become a huge stabilising figure at Mamelodi Sundowns, the team with the best defensive record this season.

BY LOVEMORE MOYO

KICKOFF: How does it feel to be playing regularly again?
WAYNE ARENDSE: All is going well and according to plan because I told myself I needed to push harder this season, and luckily for me it has worked out. All I want to do is improve on that. Being top of the log at the Christmas break and having won the Telkom KnockOut Cup definitely felt good. Hopefully there are even better things to come.

You spent a lot of time not playing. How did that feel?
Obviously it is never good because you start doubting yourself. Fortunately I kept telling myself that I knew my qualities and all I needed was to put in a bit extra in my game and it is now paying off. However, just because I am playing doesn't mean I should relax … I want to go on like this until the end of the season. When you join a big team there are obviously lots of good players and you must be aware of that and be patient. The bottom line is that you need to know that when your chance comes, you need to make very good use of it.

How did you keep yourself focused through that period of not playing?
I felt down and lost. I was frequently asking myself whether I was good enough to play at Sundowns. What helped is that my wife moved up to Johannesburg with me when I left Cape Town. She kept telling me to keep on pushing. Even the coaches kept telling me that anyone can play at any given time and I thought to myself that if there was an injury or suspension I needed to be ready.

Did you ever think about leaving?
For any footballer who hasn't been playing there will come a time when he says, 'I need to go'. There was a time when I wanted to leave – I spoke to the club, but they said they still needed me here because there was a few players leaving. I respected their decision because I still had a contract, so I stayed. But things played out in my favour and I did well in pre-season. That is when I also started backing myself by telling myself that I am good enough. I am grateful for the opportunity.

You have been very much a bit-part player since you arrived at Sundowns in 2012. How have you conditioned yourself mentally and physically?
I choose to keep my focus on one game at a time. If I do well in one game I then remind myself that you are only as good as your last game. Though I have been playing regularly, I am still keeping to the basics and being as principled as ever because that is what gets you to do the job here at Sundowns.

Do you worry about being dropped and then struggling to get back into the team?
That is why I have never put myself under pressure. All I do is say, 'Look, this is your chance now, so make use of it'. Once I start worrying about if I will make the team for the next game, then I will have problems and make mistakes.

As a 'regular', how do you keep motivating those on the sidelines?
Anyone can play at any given time – when there are injuries and suspensions there will always be an equally capable replacement. They are here in the PSL as professionals; this is not only about being on the field, but also off it too. I am sure the guys here at the club know that come February the CAF Champions League will start, there will be Nedbank Cup and League games that will come one after the other … so there will definitely be a game that they will play.

How is Pitso Mosimane handling a squad with so much quality?
Pitso will always try to keep the guys who are not playing motivated and keep those who are playing on their toes and remind them not to relax. Such is Pitso's nature that after the Telkom Final he gave us the freedom to go out, but the next day everyone was focused for the next game. There are a lot of positive vibrations in the squad now.

You came to Sundowns to win medals. I suppose you value the Telkom one most?
I felt I contributed more, so that always gives you reason to be extra happy. This one was special because I was playing in the Final. However, all the medals are special because it is always a team effort.

How much do you want the League title?
We want it badly. We lost it disappointingly last season so this year we want it back at Chloorkop. We are in a

Did you know?

Arendse is not related to Andre Arendse, Tyren Arendse or Shafeeq Arendse, who all had links with his former club Santos.

"I remind myself that you are only as good as your last game."



i

▶**Full name:** Wayne Earl Arendse ▶**Born:** 25/11/84 in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town. ▶**Original club:** Kenpark Utd, Santos juniors ▶**Former clubs:** Mitchell's Plain United ▶**PSL debut:** Santos 3 Maritzburg United 0 (13/9/06, as a sub) ▶**First goal:** Santos 1 Mpumalanga Black Aces 0 (22/1/11) ▶**International debut:** Equatorial Guinea 0 South Africa 0 (As a sub, 6/1/12, friendly) ▶**Honours:** 1 international cap; 2013/14 PSL champion; 2014/15 Nedbank Cup winner; 2015/16 Telkom Knockout winner

Career history:

SEASON	CLUB	GAMES	GLS
06/07	Santos	28 (+2 subs)	0
07/08	Santos	32	0
08/09	Santos	27 (+1 sub)	0
09/10	Santos	32	0
10/11	Santos	30 (+2 subs)	1
11/12	Santos	36	2
12/13	Sundowns	16 (+4 subs)	1
13/14	Sundowns	6 (+2 subs)	0
14/15	Sundowns	1 (+3 subs)	0
15/16	Sundowns	12 (+1 sub)	0
Totals:		**220**	**4**

Correct as at 15/01/16. League and cup matches only. Charity games and friendlies not included.



Arendse has become a mainstay in the Sundowns defence this season, helping the club clinch the Telkom Knockout Cup

PICTURES BY SYDNEY MAHLANGU/ BACKPAGEPIX(1)/DUIF DU TOIT/GALLO IMAGES(1)

good position and we want to stay there until the end of the season. God-willing, we will win it.

Patrice Motsepe has spoken about his desire for the club to conquer the continent. As players, how much do you want it?

We really want to win the Champions League – this is where the quality of the squad comes in because the coaches will need to find the right balance in using the players. The belief is there that we can conquer Africa, just as Orlando Pirates have represented us well. Last year we beat TP Mazembe at home and lost by a slight margin away and they went on to win the Champions League, and that shows that we are not far away; we are actually there. It is just up to us to believe that we can go into Africa and win this trophy. Having seen what Pirates have done, it is possible for us to win it.

What is the situation with your contract with the club, and how long do you see yourself staying with Downs?

My contract expires at the end of the season. How long I stay here will depend on the club – if the club decides to renew my contract then that is good and I will stay. The decision about my future with the club is in the club's hands, so I cannot say how long I will stay on. KO



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BACK ON TRACK

Golden Arrows' Zimbabwean international **Kudakwashe Mahachi** is relishing game-time – and the chance to prove his worth.

BY LOVEMORE MOYO

Golden Arrows midfielder Kudakwashe Mahachi has no trouble exciting crowds and drawing attention when he's on the ball. And Mamelodi Sundowns did not hesitate to sign him during the 2014 African Nations Championship, which points to his qualities as an attacking midfielder.

That he subsequently did not often feature for the Brazilians remains a mystery, however. Now, since moving on a season-long loan to Golden Arrows in September last year, Mahachi has shown all the qualities that attracted Sundowns to him in the first place.

"I am really liking my time here at Arrows because I'm doing what I came here for, which is playing football," says Mahachi, who started just seven matches at Sundowns last season, scoring a solitary goal.

Since arriving at Arrows, the 22-year-old Zimbabwean international has already started ten matches, scoring three times, including a sweet finish in a 2-0 win against Orlando Pirates in October.

"All I needed was a chance to showcase my talent with a team that would appreciate me for the kind of football I play. I needed game-time which is why I had to come here. I settled in well from the first day and I never struggled to get going with my teammates.

"I could easily understand them from the languages they speak, and I was also familiar with most of them already.

"The icing on the cake is that Arrows is traditionally a ball-playing club that likes to keep possession – I enjoy playing the ball so it makes for a perfect combination. Minus the facilities, size of the club and other things, Arrows is just the same as Sundowns in terms of playing football. We need to make sure we work as a unit to avoid being associated with relegation – we will be pushing for a top eight finish."

Mahachi argues that moving to Arrows is not a downgrade, nor does it mean he failed at Sundowns.

"I came from Zimbabwe and went straight to a team with huge demands, big pressure and high expectations. I feel I did fairly well in my first season as I was in the team a number of times," he says.

"Sundowns is a club where you are not given a chance to make mistakes as there is always another equally capable – if not better – player waiting for his chance to play," 'Nkembe' says.

"So it is always about pressure there. After I wasn't registered this season due to the foreign quota, I knew that coming to Arrows meant my priority would be to get my confidence back so that I can show what I am all about. At least at Arrows you can be given a chance to rectify your mistakes in the next game."

Mahachi is as recognisable for his colourful hairstyles as he is for his left foot on the pitch.

"I am an attacking player who likes breaking down opposition defences and then scoring goals, if not providing assists ... it's as simple as that," he says.

"Having had such an encouraging start at Arrows, the next step for me is to make sure that I improve my form, especially now that we are working under a different coach [Clinton Larsen] to the one we started the season under [Serame Letsoaka].

"What gives me hope is that I didn't show much rust when I arrived here, despite having spent about three months not playing prior to that.

"I can only continue working on my game so that other opportunities come." KO

Clearing the air

AT the time of his loan move there was confusion as to why Mahachi only left for Arrows in late September.

He explains: "I signed my contract with Arrows before the close of the transfer window in August. The only issue was my work permit, which I had to wait for before it could be made public that I had joined Arrows.

"Once it was out I started training with Arrows, got registered and immediately became available for selection. I still have a running contract with Sundowns and at the end of the season I will revert to my mother club. Only then will my future be discussed.

"In the meantime I would like to thank Arrows boss [Mato Madlala] for this chance and I want to pay her back by never disappointing her. She is a good mother."



i ▶**Full name:** Kudakwashe Mahachi ▶**Born** 29/9/83 in Bulawayo ▶**Previous clubs:** Highlanders FC Juniors and Under-17 ▶**PSL debut:** Ajax Cape Town 1 Mamelodi Sundowns 0 (PSL, 13/8/14) ▶**First PSL goal:** Moroka Swallows 0 Mamelodi Sundowns 2 (PSL, 20/8/14) ▶**Honours:** Zimbawean international (7 caps, 1 goal)

Career history:

SEASON	CLUB	GAMES	GLS
11/12	Bantu Rovers FC	n/a	
12/13	Chicken Inn FC	n/a	
2014	Highlanders	n/a	
14/15	Sundowns	7 (+8 subs)	1
15/16	Golden Arrows	10	3
Totals:		**17**	**4**

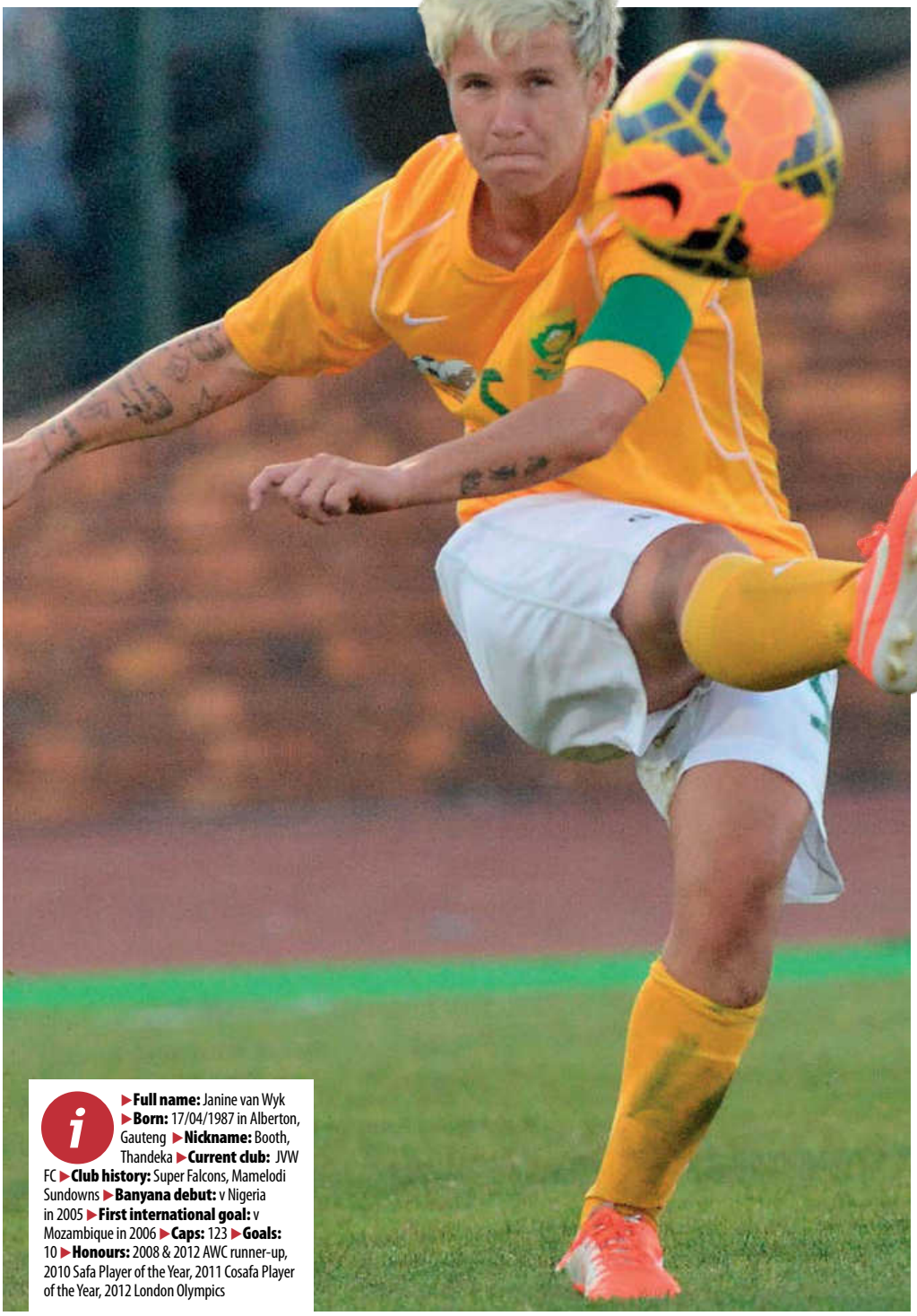
Correct as at 15/1/16. League and cup games only. Pre-season and friendly matches not included.

PICTURES BY LEFTY SHIVAMBU/GALLO IMAGES(1)



Mahachi has found a new lease on life in KwaZulu-Natal at Golden Arrows

BACKING



PICTURES BY DUFF DU TOIT/GALLO IMAGES (1)

i

▶**Full name:** Janine van Wyk ▶**Born:** 17/04/1987 in Alberton, Gauteng ▶**Nickname:** Booth, Thandeka ▶**Current club:** JVW FC ▶**Club history:** Super Falcons, Mamelodi Sundowns ▶**Banyana debut:** v Nigeria in 2005 ▶**First international goal:** v Mozambique in 2006 ▶**Caps:** 123 ▶**Goals:** 10 ▶**Honours:** 2008 & 2012 AWC runner-up, 2010 Safa Player of the Year, 2011 Cosafa Player of the Year, 2012 London Olympics

After making her debut against African powerhouse Nigeria in 2005, Janine van Wyk has gone on to amass over 100 international caps and recently captained Banyana Banyana to their second successive Olympic Games qualification.

Van Wyk started playing football at the age of five in an all-boys team in Boksburg and soon found herself in good company.

"I played with Ryan Chapman and Bernard Parker, but not in the same [Eastern Transvaal Central] district team as me at the time," Van Wyk says. "I started playing with boys at a team called Score at Under-6. Later I played at an all girls team, Springzone Sweepers, in Benoni and I played for Moroka Swallows from 2006 to 2008."

Van Wyk has benefitted from a number of significant influences throughout her career, with former Safa technical director Fran Hilton at the forefront.

"I was quite young when I first met Fran – I think I was 13 or 14. I was playing for Score, and she saw me play as the only girl in the team. My mom got her contact details and she helped me join Springzone Sweepers, where Joseph Mkhonza was coaching."

It was under Mkhonza that Van Wyk rose to prominence, receiving her first international call-up to the Women's Junior National team, aged 16.

BANYANA

Janine van Wyk celebrated a decade in the Women's Senior National team last year. Chad Klate visits the Banyana Banyana captain at her home in Edenvale.

Two years later she caught the eye of then-national team coach August Makalakalane, and earned her first Banyana cap in the 2-0 defeat to Nigeria at the African Women's Championships in 2005.

"It was hard to adapt to [Makalakalane's] mannerisms. He was a very hard guy who hated losing, so whenever we lost he'd have a few really vulgar words for us," Van Wyk says.

"I think we struggled to adapt to his coaching style and how he is as a person, but after working with him for quite some time we got to know him better, and he was a really nice and fun guy off the field. On the field I think he just wanted the work done, and a lot of the girls found it difficult to deal with him.

"I really liked him as a coach because he was so hard on us, and I'm a player who always wants to get told when I'm wrong so I can improve, so when I heard all the bad rumours about him I didn't believe it – I think players didn't like him and wanted to get rid of him."

Makalakane lost his job after two of his players alleged he sexually harrassed them.

Siphiwe Mkhonza took over from Makalakalane in December 2010 on an interim basis, before taking the position full-time in June 2011.

"Mkhonza was easy for me to adapt to because he was my club coach, and very soft and introverted. I think players kind of took advantage of him because of his softness. Despite this, he was a very experienced and knowledgeable coach."



Van Wyk (bottom row, third-from-right) vice-captained the Eastern Transvaal Central District boys team in her younger years. Ryan Chapman is far right in the middle row

But the skipper reserves her greatest praise for current coach Vera Pauw, who took the reins in March 2014.

"Vera Pauw is the best coach that I've worked with," Van Wyk says. "She's so experienced and she's coached all over the world – her knowledge is incredible.

"She knows how to overcome strong opponents, and we never play the same system, depending on how the opponents play. In that sense she's by far the most experienced and by far the most professional coach.

"She always brings out the best in every individual, and if someone needs extra work on something then she'd call that player in to do video analysis and point out weaknesses. That professionalism is something we'd never had in Banyana."

Under Pauw, South Africa will go to the Rio Olympics in August, and Van Wyk describes this as an amazing achievement under a coach that has completely changed the Banyana set-up.

"We've never ever been as close as we have been in the past year, and I think it's down to the fact that we've been camping much more than before," she says. "In the past we would be called up a month before any international tournament, and prepare only for that period, but with Vera we have stayed together up to the African Women's Championships [in October] last year.

"I see the team more like a family now because we've been through all the ups and downs together after we missed out on the Women's World Cup and the All Africa Games. I've never experienced this atmosphere and team spirit before – everyone gets along no matter how old, young or experienced you are."

Van Wyk took over as captain in 2013 after Amanda Dlamini stepped down, and describes her role over the past two years as an enjoyable one, especially since Pauw's arrival.

"As captain, my duties are obviously to make sure everything within the team and among the players is running smoothly," she says. "The coach also calls me in if there are any tough decisions to make, to give an inside perspective.

"My job is mainly on the field – leading, motivating and encouraging the girls and keeping everyone together. But I also have other experienced players that can help me, like Amanda, who can also lift the players when the chips are down, so my job is quite easy."

Looking ahead, Safa have already indicated their intention to set up friendly matches for Banyana against high-profile teams in the build-up to the Olympics in Rio, and Van Wyk is excited at the prospect.

"I'm really excited about Banyana's future, playing friendly internationals and growing in experience, especially against teams outside of Africa. We have to play against the best women's teams to see what level we are at ahead of the Olympics. We want to get out of the group stage; an improvement from 2012 when we were just happy to be there. Now we are hungry to compete and go up a level to see how much better we are than last time." KO

SEASON TO TASTE?

The PSL has toyed with the idea of reverting back to a **calendar-year football season**. Is it time for South African football to get in step with the rest of the continent again? By Nick Said.

The Premier Soccer League (PSL) is based in a country at the very bottom of Africa whose clubs and national team compete in tournaments under the auspices of the Confederation of African Football (CAF).

So why do we have a football season that is instead aligned to Europe's calendar?

Prior to the formation of the PSL in 1996, the South African domestic season ran from February to November, but with a new dawn came a change in thinking to align our calendar with the major leagues in the world.

One of the main drivers in this was to try and entice top clubs from around the world to come to South Africa in their off-season, adding some glitz and glamour to the local game.

That has largely failed, bar for a few years when the Vodacom Challenge was played and Manchester United and Manchester City were visitors.

In terms of the football watched from the stands, it has brought few benefits and one negative. Kick-offs are later on hot summer days.

But where it has impacted is off the pitch and on the national teams. By not aligning with the CAF calendar, the South African league and Bafana Bafana are never quite in sync.

While the PSL has been more accommodating in recent years by opening up blocks of weekends to help the national cause – as they did for the Africa Under-23 Cup of Nations – they battle with an already packed programme and there is only so much accommodating they can do.

With a domestic season that has, some would argue, one knockout competition too many and needs to shed two teams from its top-flight, there is little room to manoeuvre.

Is it coincidence that the only time Bafana claimed the Africa Cup of Nations title in 1996 was in the year in which the season changed to August-May?

Or that the only time a South African side has won the African Champions Cup was in 1995 when the domestic season gave Orlando Pirates the 'space' to go all the way?

Pirates' domestic form has suffered this season not just because they played extra matches in reaching the Final of the Caf Confederation Cup, but because the players have had no break in 18 months.



Hellenic and Orlando Pirates do battle in 1995, when the League ran from February to November

"For now, our position remains the same – we are maintaining the status quo."



With the CAF competitions being played through the South African pre-season, there was no time off for players. And they are paying for it now, and will do so well into 2016.

Stan Matthews, then CEO of the PSL and now back as boss of SuperSport United, said three years ago that the League was keen to return to the February-November calendar and that the aim was to make the change in 2014.

"In principle the executive have agreed to switching the season to a calendar year to be in line with the rest of Africa," Matthews said in April 2012.

"The League wants to see its clubs do well in Africa and this is a step in that direction."

A year earlier Pirates chairman Irvin Khoza ***(above)***, who is also chairman of the PSL, seemed keen to push the idea through.

"We are seriously looking at changing the season," Khoza said. "We are hoping the Board of Governors will make that decision ... though I am now speaking as the chairman of Orlando Pirates, not the PSL.

"If that happens it will increase the chances of teams in South Africa to compete with the rest of Africa. It otherwise

PICTURES BY GALLO IMAGES (1)/SYDNEY MAHLANGU /BACKPAGEPIX (1)/LEFTY SHIVAMBU/GALLO IMAGES (1)

PSL Top 8 in 2015 calendar year

This is how the Top 8 would look if points were tallied for the 2015 calendar year



	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PTS	PPG
Sundowns	25	16	4	5	42	20	52	2.08
Bidvest Wits	24	14	5	5	34	20	47	1.96
Chiefs	24	12	8	4	33	16	44	1.83
Pirates	23	9	8	6	32	24	35	1.52
Black Aces	25	9	10	6	36	28	37	1.48
Free State Stars	24	9	8	7	27	26	35	1.46
Bloem Celtic	25	10	6	9	29	22	36	1.44
Platinum Stars	25	9	9	7	30	29	36	1.44

Note: PPG = Points Per Game

The top 8 teams from 2015 in matches played February-December. Obviously some have played more than others, so they have been ranked by average points gained per game.

puts teams under pressure; in the middle of their pre-season they must go and play away … they come back tired."

In fact, everybody – club coaches and national team bosses alike – seemed to think it was a good idea ... but it never happened. Why?

The PSL did at the time look extensively at the idea of moving the season back to a calendar year, but in the end decided that the pros of keeping the season as it is outweighed the cons.

"It must be noted that this was discussed a while ago – in the last two to three years – and we solicited different views on the matter," PSL General Manager Derek Blanckensee tells KICK OFF.

"It has not been tabled at the Board of Governors. For now, our position remains the same – we are still going ahead maintaining the status quo."

It is worth noting that the north African leagues of Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, which have had so much continental success for their clubs in the last decade, all run, like the PSL, from August-May.

KICK OFF has obtained the PSL's positioning document that lists the positive and negatives of moving to a single calendar year.

They are listed as follows:

The pros …

- Registrations for CAF inter-club competitions will be in line with registrations for our domestic season.
 We currently have a situation where clubs qualifying for CAF may sell a number of their players in our local off-season, players who were registered for and played in the early rounds of the CAF competition.
 Because of the limit on registrations for CAF, clubs are then not able to register as many of their new acquisitions as they would like and therefore find themselves with weakened CAF squads.
- There will be no clash with the Africa Cup of Nations, which currently brings about a long break in our fixtures every two years.
- Our off-season will be in December and January, which suits traditional family holidays in South Africa, with that period being the hottest part of the year, a time when conditions for players are arduous.
- It is dry in the interior of the country so matches are generally not disrupted by storms.
- Players will get used to playing in cold conditions which will prepare them for playing overseas and therefore make them more marketable.

… and the cons

- In mid-winter our pitches are generally in a poor state, with Kikuyu grass being dormant and almost white in colour and very weak, resulting in bare patches and affecting both the quality of the football and the television product.
- The conditions for spectators are very cold, particularly at night. With high quality TV coverage this will result in dropping spectator numbers as fans will choose to stay at home. The broadcaster's requirements are increasing, resulting in us playing night matches which exacerbates the problem of the cold weather.
- The season will clash with the World Cup every four years. There is also a potential clash with the Confederations Cup if the country winning the African Cup of Nations has PSL players. Fifa also typically schedules a number of qualifiers or other Fifa dates during that time.
- If South Africa qualifies for the African Cup of Nations, the tournament would come approximately a month after the end of our season, which is not ideal due to injuries, tiredness etc.
- Our transfer windows would not be completely aligned with the windows used by countries outside of Africa. This can have a negative effect in terms of concluding international transfer deals.
- The weather is very windy and wet in Cape Town during the winter months.
- Contractual obligations with sponsors will make the transition from one season to the other difficult.

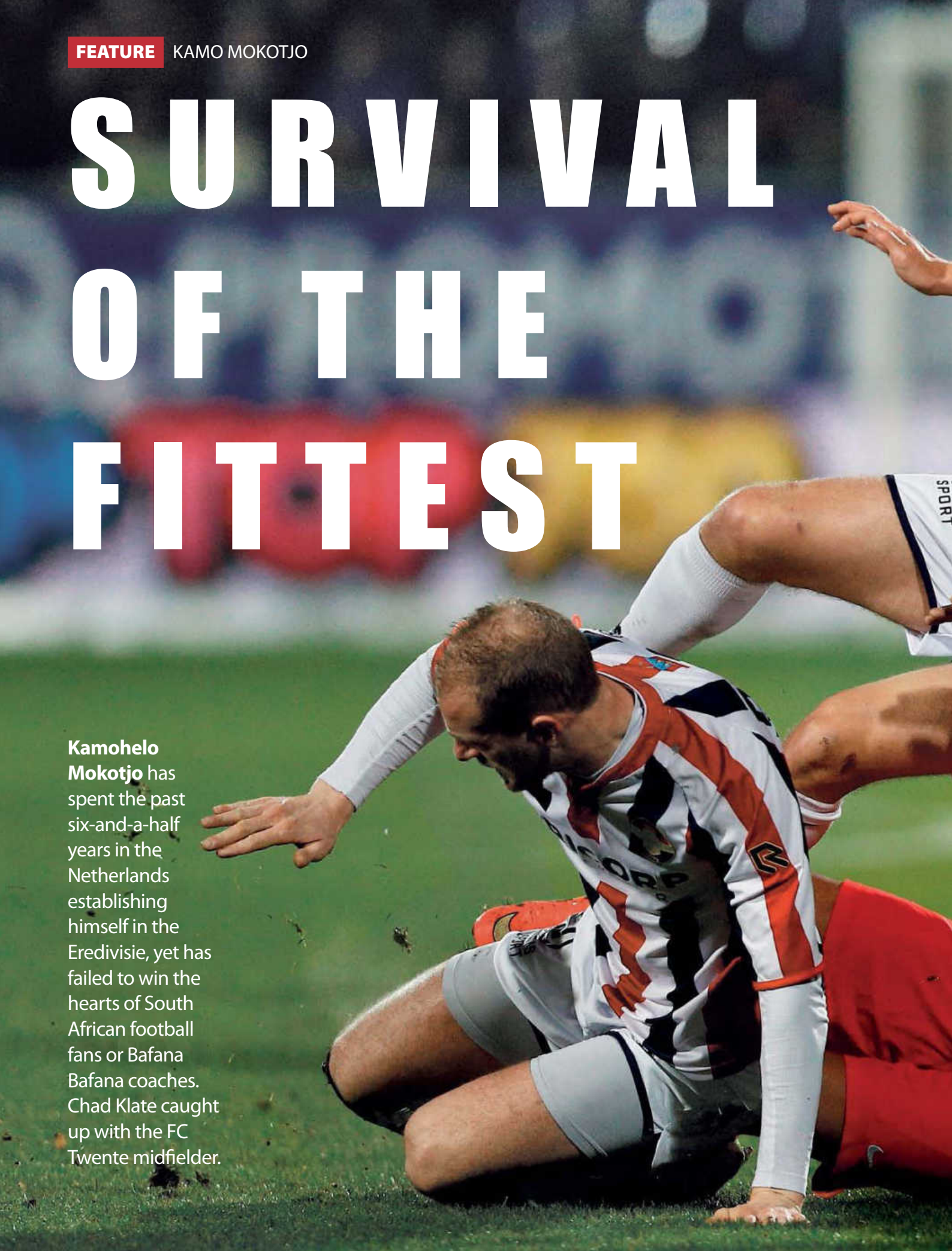
Arguments can be made on both sides, but perhaps the most important point is that there are no plans to change the season in the foreseeable future. What we see now is what we will get in the next few years at least. KO

Continental comparison

Selected African leagues that run August-May: Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, DR Congo, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Lesotho, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda.

Selected African leagues that run February-November: Angola, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST



Kamohelo Mokotjo has spent the past six-and-a-half years in the Netherlands establishing himself in the Eredivisie, yet has failed to win the hearts of South African football fans or Bafana Bafana coaches. Chad Klate caught up with the FC Twente midfielder.



Hailing from remote Odendaalsrus in the Free State, Kamohelo Mokotjo has put the gold-mining town on the map since becoming it's first resident to make it onto the European footballing stage. He also joins a select few South Africans to have established themselves in the Dutch Eredivisie.

The last South African to do so was former Bafana Bafana captain Steven Pienaar, who went on to join Bundesliga outfit Borussia Dortmund before moving to the English Premier League, where has been plying his trade for the past nine seasons.

Mokotjo arrived in Rotterdam back in July 2009 after signing from SuperSport United, who had a direct partnership with Feyenoord at the time. He featured for Excelsior, Feyenoord and PEC Zwolle, before joining Twente at the beginning of the 2014/15 campaign.

Now in his second season with the Enschede-based outfit, the 24-year-old midfielder has become the second South African to manage over 150 Dutch League appearances (after Glen Salmon), with 163 starts and 18 substitute appearances to his name as at the start of 2016, seven years into his career in Holland.

Mokotjo did not plan on staying in the Netherlands for such a lengthy period, but he believes it has brought stability and consistency to his game.

"You know, when you go into something and you have a plan – you're going to go into something and get out. Because I was on trial here, I thought it would be perfect to come here and it would be easy to move on to a bigger league, but I had my downs in the beginning, especially at Feyenoord. The most important thing is that I still held my own," he says.

Now he is enjoying the 'ups': "Everything is looking good for me individually, and I would sum it all up as a very stable and consistent time. I've won a few trophies [the KNVB Cup and Dutch Super Cup] with a small team [Zwolle], and that shows character and growth. I made history for myself, as well as for the teams I've played for, so I have a lot to be proud of."

"Soon I'll be turning 25 [in March], and I think I'm ready for any league





Mokotjo believes his game has developed in the Eredivisie, but feels he hasn't been given a fair chance at national level

in the world – that's why I appreciate my time spent here. It hasn't been the easiest but because I stuck at it I've learnt so much, not only about football, but also about myself.

"Holland is not the easiest place for a player from outside the European Union, which is why you don't see many of us [Africans] here. There are better places like Belgium, but they say, 'If you can survive in Holland, you can survive anywhere'."

Despite facing difficulties at Feyenoord – where he was forced to join Excelsior on loan – Kamo was adamant he would stick it out and wait for his opportunity to leave a lasting mark.

"I don't understand why players would come here and want to go back [home]. I mean, why not just fight it out? Reduce your salary if you must, just so long as you remain here. I struggled in the beginning ... the coach who signed me, Gertjan Verbeek left just as I arrived so I was loaned out in my first month, and that was because the new coach didn't know me.

"But I knew the qualities I possessed, that all I needed to do was to work hard. I told myself, 'If they send me to the gym, I'm going to work hard'. I wasn't worried about passing a ball properly because I can pass a ball; all I had to worry about was my movement and positioning.

"I'm a thinker on the pitch, because I know I'm not the quickest player, so I need to think," he concedes.

Mokotjo left Feyenoord in 2013 and joined PEC Zwolle, who had just been promoted, but the midfielder explains that he was willing to take that step back in order to grow and establish himself in his favoured position: central midfield.

"I personally pushed for that move – I couldn't stand playing at right-back any longer. I wanted to play in my original position and, in that last year at Feyenoord, I think I played one game, so I wanted to go.

"Ronald Koeman [the former Feyenoord manager] said, 'I like you as a player, you're versatile and I can use you in different positions', but I said no ... I needed to play in my own position so that I could develop.

"The level was never a problem for me. I just needed a chance, a platform, to play so that I could prove myself. What I needed to accept was that I would have to reduce my salary, but I was prepared to take that. Many people wouldn't go for that, but there's always a chance of success if you're playing. I didn't have to take a step back; I could have come back to South Africa, but I knew the Eredivisie wasn't a problem for me," Mokotjo says.

Just 22 years old at the time, the former national Under-12 star took his future into his own hands after he had parted ways with his South African agent, as he felt it would be in his own best interest.

"I'm that type of guy that's always thinking. If I need advice, I'm not going to ask someone first and then think about it; I'm going to think about it first and, if I feel like I need a second opinion, I'll ask. Even the people closest to me know that," he says.

Mokotjo knew that whatever he was lacking, he would be able to grow and develop into a complete player, in line with the famed Dutch philosophy.

"You learn about the Dutch philosophy, and if you don't have the patience to learn, you are going to have a problem," he says. "They want players who have certain qualities. When you play in a certain position, you must have all the qualities for that position; if you don't, or you have some, they will make sure that when you leave, you have all of it.

"In other countries you won't develop. But Holland is like the high school of football. You make your next move feeling assured that 'I'm ready', and not just making the move with hopes that things will work out wherever you're going – you actually know what you're doing. It's a good league and you need patience. Players like Romario, Ronaldo, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Steven Pienaar and Benni McCarthy all played in Holland," he points out.

Mokotjo is however wary of staying in one place for too long and feels he is

i ▶**Full name:** Kamohelo Mokotjo ▶**Born** 11/3/91 in Odendaalsrus ▶**Previous clubs:** SuperSport United Juniors ▶**PSL debut:** SuperSport Utd 0 Santos 1 (as a sub, 20/12/08) ▶**International debut:** South Africa 2 Mozambique 0 (11/9/2012, as a sub) ▶**Honours:** 6 international caps; Under-23, Under-20 and Under-12 international; 2003 Danone Nations Cup winner; Dutch Cup winner 2014, Dutch Super Cup winner 2014

Career history:

SEASON	CLUB	MATCHES	GOALS
08/09	SuperSport United	(1 sub only)	0
09/10	Excelsior	27 (+2 subs)	1
10/11	Feyenoord	14 (+1 sub)	0
11/12	Feyenoord	7 (+15 subs)	1
12/13	Feyenoord/Excelsior U21	20	0
	Feyenoord reserves	5	0
	Feyenoord	(1 sub only)	0
13/14	PEC Zwolle	33	2
14/15	FC Twente	38 (+1 sub)	1
15/16	FC Twente	19	1
TOTALS		**163**	**6**

Correct as at 15/01/2016. League and Cup matches only. Friendly and charity games not included. Includes Play-offs.

PICTURES BY DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES (1)/ANESH DEBIKY/GALLO IMAGES (1)/DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES (1)/DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES

nearing his peak.

He believes he is now at the perfect age to take on tougher challenges, perhaps in one of the elite leagues – Spain, England or Germany.

"At a certain age, 25-26, you should be out of here because there's not much more for you to prove, unless you're actually a home-grown talent and you are content with being close to your family," he says. "There are still the big-boy leagues to go to, where the money is."

A big move is imminent, though he is in no rush to abandon a struggling Twente, who are enduring serious financial troubles that has resulted in the club being hit with a three-year ban from all European competitions by the Dutch FA.

"Twente are an amazing side – they have a good name; a good reputation and it's usually a top three, top four side – so I'm not going to just leave and go anywhere. I'd rather stay than go to the wrong club, or take another step backward. Last season I had a very stable season, and this season too – I've started and finished every game," he says.

Reported interest for Mokotjo began last season, when he was linked to Premier League side Southampton, and more recently French Ligue 1 outfit Nantes was rumoured to want his services.

The sad reality Mokotjo currently faces is his difficulty to secure a work permit to play in England due to his lack of experience at international level, which requires his national team to be ranked within the top 50 in the Fifa Rankings, while he also needs to feature in 75 percent of international matches over the past two years.

The former junior international has featured only six times for Bafana since making his debut back in 2012, and only been awarded one start – a 1-1 draw in a friendly against Honduras in October last year. He admits disappointment at his bad fortune at international level, but remains hopeful of being able to show his potential and leave his mark in the Green and Gold.

"It is what it is … I always try to avoid speaking about this, but I really don't know why I haven't been given the opportunity," he laments.

"Even when I was at my best, when I had my best season in Holland, I still didn't make it. It's disappointing, it really is, but I can confidently say that I've done all I can to put myself in a position to be played in the national team, and it still did not happen – for reasons I still do not know." KO



MADIBA MAGIC

*20 years ago, on 3 February 1996, **Bafana Bafana** captain Neil Tovey received the African Nations Cup from president Nelson Mandela. Mark Gleeson recalls the Afcon triumph, game-by-game, with some of the heroes of South Africa 96.*



DREAM START



South Africa made a dream start to the 1996 Nations Cup with a comprehensive 3-0 victory over a much-vaunted Cameroon side at Soccer City.

Phil Masinga and Mark Williams bagged first half goals before the brilliant John Moshoeu added a third in the second half.

It set the tone for three weeks of fevered support for the national team, which seemed to ride on a wave of national pride and confidence.

Left-back David Nyathi *(above)* was one of those Bafana Bafana players who terrorised Cameroon on the day and he says the seeds of this victory were sewn months earlier.

"Our last warm-up match ahead of the tournament was against Germany about a month before, and we played well in a 0-0 draw," Nyathi says. "After that game we felt that we were ready for the Nations Cup and could hold our own against any team.

"It gave us the confidence in what we were doing and the belief that we could maintain the right intensity through the Nations Cup."

Nyathi says a pep-talk by president Nelson Mandela the day before the Cameroon clash enhanced the squad's determination to excel.

"Mandela spoke brilliantly, about how we did not just represent ourselves, but the whole nation. He made us believe in ourselves. I guess it also put us under a little bit of pressure because we did not want to disappoint!

"On the day of the game we were nervous – there is no other way of putting it. But the drive from the hotel in Johannesburg to Soccer City … we saw the support that the people in the street had for us.

"When the game started, everybody just wanted to touch the ball. The minute you make your first pass, you feel you are in the game, in the zone, and everything else doesn't matter.

"We knew we needed to start well to take the pressure off us and also to settle the crowd, who were desperate for us to succeed.

"Once Phil got the early goal and Mark scored the second, we were well on our way to winning. Cameroon just did not have the same energy as us on that day.

"Shoes and Doctor worked their magic and we never let up the pressure on Cameroon. It was the perfect start to the tournament for us."

13/01/1996
SA (1) 3 (Masinga 14 Williams 37 Moshoeu 55)
Cameroon 0
Attendance: 75 000
SA: Arendse, Motaung, Tovey, Fish, Nyathi, Tinkler, Buthelezi (*Mkhalele 62*), Moshoeu, Khumalo, Williams (*Bartlett 71*), Masinga (*Makalakalane 82*)
Cameroon: Andem, Jang, Agbo, Mimboe, Song, Wome (*Ntocko 38*), F Omam-Biyik, Tchango (*Simo 54*), MV Foe, Mouyeme, Tchami (*Mbarga 54*)

— 20 YEARS ON



RIDING THE WAVE

South Africa made it back-to-back wins with a 1-0 success over a determined Angola in wet conditions.

Mark Williams scored the vital goal, and Bafana Bafana now were guaranteed a quarter-final spot.

Goalkeeper Andre Arendse was on a run of clean-sheets, and in commanding form. He says the 3-0 win over Cameroon allowed the players to relax and play without inhibitions.

"The first thing that comes to mind when I think back is that we realised after beating Cameroon that we did not need to be so overawed about the tournament," Arendse *(above)* says.

"We thought, 'Hang on, we can beat these teams'. We had a lot of confidence.

"Against Angola, I remember it was a very wet pitch which makes things a lot more difficult for a goalkeeper, so I was proud to have kept another clean-sheet.

"It was quite a battle until we scored the goal ... then we began to settle, we kept possession well and we held our shape as a team.

"Another thing I remember was whenever we looked into the stands, we saw thousands of people cheering us on. Don't underestimate the role the Soccer City crowd played in lifting us through the tournament."

20/01/1996
SA 1 (Williams 57)
Angola 0
Attendance: 30 000
SA: Arendse, Motaung, Fish, Tovey, Nyathi, Tinkler, Buthelezi (*Mkhalele 71*), Moshoeu, Khumalo (*Radebe 76*), P Masinga, Williams (*Bartlett 88*)
Angola: Orlando, Helder Vicente, Antonio Neto, Carlos Pedro, Wilson, Fua (*Luizinho 72*), Castella, Joni, Paulao, Tubia, Abel Campos (*Quinzinho 58*)

CLIVE WINS RESPECT

South Africa lost their final Group A clash to Egypt – coached by Ruud Krol – after coach Clive Barker rested key players, including John Moshoeu, Doctor Khumalo and Linda Buthelezi.

After opening wins against Cameroon and Angola, Bafana's path to the quarter-finals was assured, but this match served as a reminder that the road to the title was a treacherous one.

Buthelezi says Barker's decision to rest his stars proved the team's downfall, but in a roundabout way it served as impetus for the remainder of the tournament.

"Clive made a mistake as a coach, that is obvious now," Buthelezi says. "He should never have dropped us to the bench. He was trying to rest us and give opportunities to others, but it broke the rhythm of the team.

"No modern coach would do something like that now; you don't drop the core of your team in the middle of a tournament.

"But the great thing about Clive is that he is man enough to admit his mistakes and he apologised to the team for it afterwards. He came to us

and said, 'This is what I have done wrong and I am sorry. You have to go out there now and fight in the quarter-finals, not for me, but for the country.'

"We respected him for that and I believe it put us in the right frame of mind. We became even more determined to succeed."

Ahmed El-Kass gave Egypt the lead inside seven minutes for a victory that sent the Pharaohs to the quarter-finals too.

24/01/1996
SA 0
Egypt 1 (El Kass 7)
Attendance: 20 000
SA: Arendse, Motaung, Tovey, Fish, Nyathi, Tinkler, Radebe (*Moosa 76*), Makalakalane (*Moshoeu 39*), Mkhalele, Williams, P Masinga (*Bartlett 71*)
Egypt: El Sayed, Radwan, H Ramzy, Abel Hadi, Samir, Youssef, Sabry, Khashaba, Emam (*Koshery 85*), El Kass (*Gamal 33*), A Maher (*Kamouna 74*)



Linda Buthelezi tackles Lasad Hanini of Tunisia

SAVED BY SHOES



Bafana Bafana faced a difficult quarter-final against Algeria, who were unbeaten in the pool stages.

"Clive came up to me in the dressing room and said, 'It's an important game, you are a defender, make sure you defend,' Mark Fish *(above)* recalls. "Of course, within the first five minutes I was in their box trying to score. Clive was tearing his hair out…"

After a tense opening 70 minutes, South Africa grabbed the lead when Fish scored his first international goal.

"I got in between two defenders and poked the ball home ... I didn't really know how to celebrate. But it was a great moment for me."

Algeria rallied and equalised with six minutes remaining to stun the capacity home crowd.

"It was a deflating moment as we had worked so hard to get into the lead. What we had to guard against then was letting our heads drop."

But just a minute later and the home side were back in front as the mercurial Moshoeu scored.

"The ball ended up with Shoes and you knew he wouldn't miss," Fish says. "It was a huge moment and showed the character within the side."

Fish says the tournament was a roller-coaster from start to finish. "The morning of that quarter-final, Madiba came to visit us at our hotel. The nerves were already going then, but he helped to calm us.

"We had an unbelievable coach as well. Clive made you feel like you could beat anybody in the world."

Quarter-final
27/01/1996
SA 2 (Fish 72 Moshoeu 85)
Algeria 1 (Lazizi 84)
Attendance: 30 000
SA: Arendse, Motaung, Tovey, Fish, Radebe, Tinkler, Buthelezi, Khumalo (*Mkhalele 79*), Moshoeu, P Masinga, Williams *(Bartlett 76*)
Algeria: Haniched Bakhti (*Hamdani 60*), Zerrouki, Slatni, Lazizi, Meftah, El Ouazani (*Zekri 81*), Saib, Dziri, Lounici, Messabih

PERFECTION



There are some games where just everything clicks on a football field and for South Africa, this came at the opportune moment when they thumped an excellent Ghana side 3-0 in the African Nations Cup semi-final.

The victory ranks among the best performances by Bafana since re-introduction to international football in 1992.

Shoes Moshoeu pulled the strings in midfield, grabbing a brace, and Shaun Bartlett netted an excellent goal.

The Black Stars were without their talisman Abedi Pele, who was injured. He would later claim there would have been a different result had he played, but those hollow words belie the excellence of Bafana on the night.

"That was most definitely one of the best performances I was involved with during my time with Bafana," coach Clive Barker *(above)* recalls 20 years on.

"I have often said it and will repeat again: I think we would have beaten any side in the world that night. We were simply magnificent.

"Shoes was magnificent in controlling everything that we were doing and giving us someone to play around. Lucas Radebe gave such a powerful performance in keeping Tony Yeboah quiet – he marked him completely out of the game.

"Those were two pivotal players for us, but every member of the team was superb."

Barker is at a loss to explain why the pieces of the puzzle fell together so neatly: "Some days everything falls into place perfectly. Why that day and not others, I cannot say."

Barker says the performance probably changed the perception Tunisia held about the potency of the Bafana team which made them set out their stall slightly differently in the Final, playing into South African hands.

Semi-final
31/01/1996
SA (1) 3 (Moshoeu 22 87 Williams 46)
Ghana 0
Attendance: 75 000
SA: Arendse, Motaung, Tovey, Fish, Radebe, Tinkler, Buthelezi (*Moeti 76*), Khumalo, Moshoeu, Bartlett (*Mudau 84*), Williams
Ghana: S Addo, Amankwah, Asare, Dodoo, J Addo, Johnson, Acheampong (*Tanko 63*), Kumah, Akunnor, K Ayew (*Lamptey 59*), Yeboah

DESTINY CALLING

The 1996 African Nations Cup decider will forever be remembered as the 'Mark Williams final' as the striker came off the bench to net twice in the space of three minutes and write his name into the country's folklore.

Williams reveals the day did not start quite as he expected, but from early in the morning he had "a divine belief" that he would play a pivotal role in deciding the fortunes of the final.

"We met president Nelson Mandela before every game at 6am at our hotel and the Final was no different," Williams says. "Usually he greeted the captain [Neil Tovey] first before speaking to the players, but on this occasion I was late into the room, at one minute to six, and so I was at the end of the line.

"Madiba said to me, 'Mark, today you are going to war, but no matter what happens the country is behind you' and he hugged me. I was awe-struck. That Mandela knew my name took me into another world.

"We then had the pre-match meal where Clive announced the team. I was there, but I don't remember any of it, I was floating on such great emotions.

"One of the reporters had asked me in the morning how many goals I would score in the final and I just held up the Amakhosi peace sign, you know, which signals two.

"We got to the stadium and the players started getting changed. I put my kit on and noticed that Andre Arendse was looking at me strangely.

"I asked him why and he said to me, 'You're putting on the wrong kit, you're not starting the game'. I looked around and sure enough counted the players who were starting. "I think that I had just assumed that going into the game, with Phil Masinga having missed the semi-final through suspension, that I would play.

"That knocked me back a bit, but it did not make me any less determined to do what I believed I was there for. I just had to get on the pitch!"

Williams says he used every trick in his repertoire to try and catch the attention of coach Barker as the match progressed, scoreless.

"Into the second half and there was still no score, the fans started to chant 'Free Willy' and I thought, 'That must be me they are calling'. But there was still no movement from the coaching staff.

"I actually moved myself from the middle of the dug-out to the end so the fans could see me and start chanting again.

"I told the person sitting there that I needed to be on the end so that I could stretch my stiff muscles, but it was just so I could be more visible to the fans. And sure enough they started chanting again.

"Finally Clive called me to go on and the rest is history. After celebrating the first goal I remember looking up at Madiba in the president's suite and he had tears in his eyes. I could see them even though I was 50 metres away; it was like I was looking through a telescope.

"Doctor Khumalo gave me a great pass for the second goal. Before he passed he had made a brilliant tackle too. He had a great game.

"I honestly believe I was called by God to do something that great that day," he said through a strained voice. "I can feel it now even as I am speaking to you 20 years later. It is a hard thing to explain, I just knew it was my destiny."

Nations Cup Final
03/02/1996

SA 2 (Williams 73, 75)
Tunisia 0
Attendance: 80 000
SA: Arendse, Motaung, Tovey, Fish, Radebe, Tinkler, Buthelezi (*Mkhalele 51*), Khumalo, Moshoeu, Bartlett, P Masinga (*Williams 65*)
Tunisia: El Ouaer, Boukadida, Rekhissa, Chouchane, Jaballah, Beya, Bouazizi (*A Hassen 77*), Fekhi, Godhbane (*Hanini 46*), Sellimi, M Slimane KO



Winner – Mark Williams celebrates his second goal in the Final

How the cup was won

Nations Cup 1996

Group A (Johannesburg)
13/1/96 South Africa 3 Cameroon 0
15/1/96 Egypt 2 Angola 1
18/1/96 Cameroon 2 Egypt 1
20/1/96 South Africa 1 Angola 0
24/1/96 South Africa 0 Egypt 1
24/1/96 Angola 3 Cameroon 3

SOUTH AFRICA	**3**	**2**	**0**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**6**
EGYPT	**3**	**2**	**0**	**1**	**4**	**3**	**6**
Cameroon	3	1	1	1	5	7	4
Angola	3	0	1	2	4	6	1

Group B (Bloemfontein)
14/1/96 Zambia 0 Algeria 0
15/1/96 Sierra Leone 2 Burkina Faso 1
18/1/96 Algeria 2 Sierra Leone 0
20/1/96 Burkina Faso 1 Zambia 5
24/1/96 Burkina Faso 1 Algeria 2
24/1/96 Sierra Leone 0 Zambia 4

ZAMBIA	**3**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**9**	**1**	**7**
ALGERIA	**3**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**4**	**1**	**7**
Sierra Leone	3	1	0	2	2	7	3
Burkina Faso	3	0	0	3	3	9	0

Group C (Durban)
16/1/96 Gabon 1 Liberia 2
19/1/96 Zaire 0 Gabon 2
25/1/96 Liberia 0 Zaire 2

GABON	**2**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**3**	**2**	**3**
ZAIRE	**2**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**3**
Liberia	2	1	0	1	2	3	3

NB: Nigeria withdrew; Guinea declined invitation

Group D (Port Elizabeth)
14/1/96 Ivory Coast 0 Ghana 2
16/1/96 Tunisia 1 Mozambique 1
19/1/96 Ghana 2 Tunisia 1
21/1/96 Mozambique 0 Ivory Coast 1
25/1/96 Mozambique 0 Ghana 2
25/1/96 Tunisia 3 Ivory Coast 1

GHANA	**3**	**3**	**0**	**0**	**6**	**1**	**9**
TUNISIA	**3**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**5**	**4**	**4**
Ivory Coast	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Mozambique	3	0	1	2	1	4	1

Quarter-finals
(Johannesburg)
27/1/96 South Africa 2 Algeria 1
(Bloemfontein)
27/1/96 Zambia 3 Egypt 1
(Port Elizabeth)
28/1/96 Ghana 1 Zaire 0
(Durban)
28/1/96 Gabon 1 Tunisia 1 [aet]
Tunisia won 4-1 on penalties

Semi-finals
(Durban)
31/1/96 Zambia 2 Tunisia 4
(Johannesburg)
31/1/96 South Africa 3 Ghana 0

Third Place Match (Johannesburg)
3/2/96 Zambia 1 Ghana 0

Final (Johannesburg)
3/2/96 South Africa 2 Tunisia 0

BARÇA OR B
WHO'S BETT

There are very few football fans around the globe that can argue against Spanish giants Barcelona and Bundesliga heavyweights Bayern Munich being the top two in-form teams in Europe.

The duo have brushed aside most opponents in their path, mesmerising fans with an entertaining and attacking brand of football and scoring with ease as they dominate their local leagues, while performing on the continental stage as well.

A combination of impressive individual talent, team cohesion, tactical acumen and forward-thinking tacticians make both clubs a feared force in Europe. Here we break down their impressive form in recent times.

League supremacy

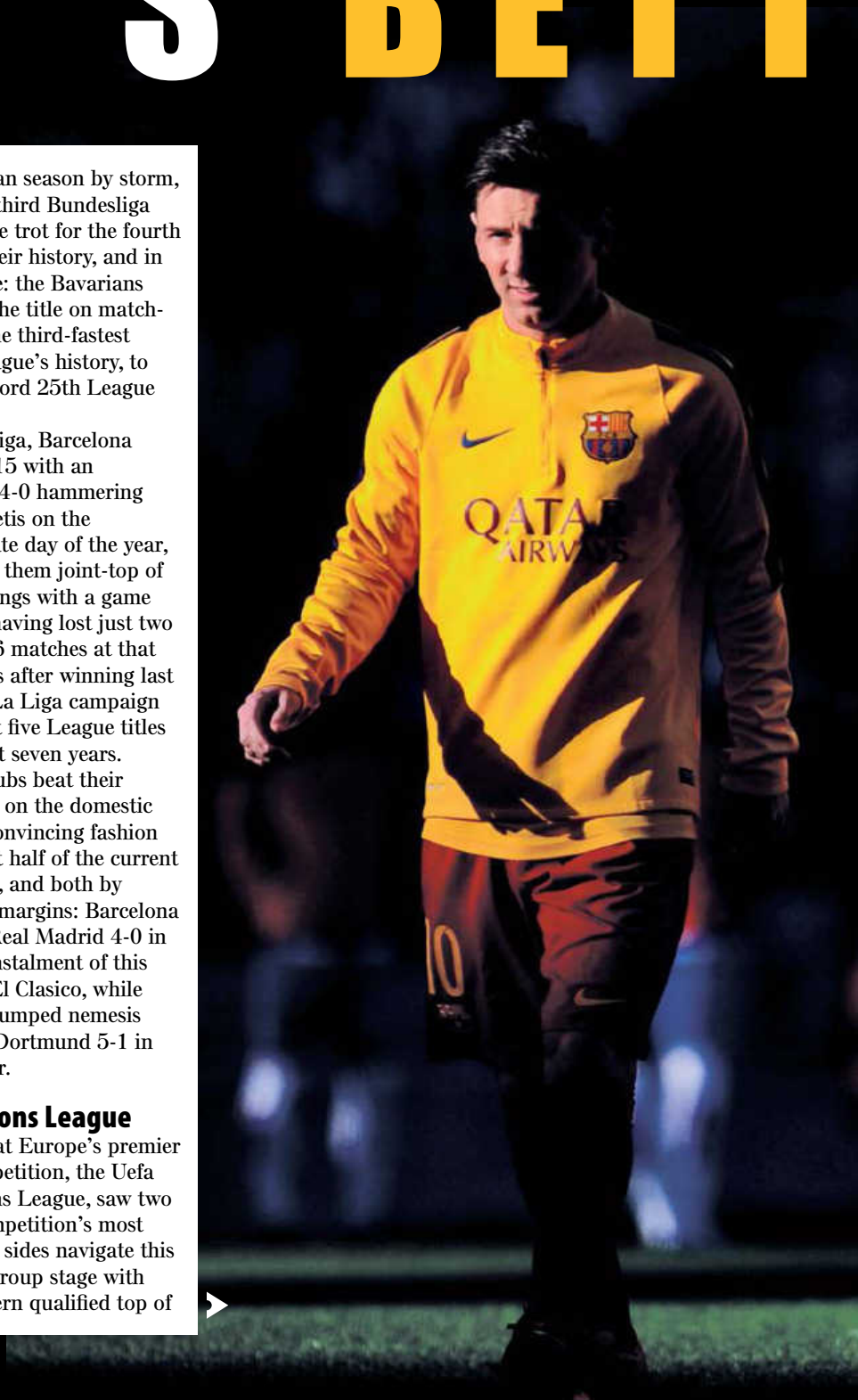
Winners of their domestic leagues in the 2014/15 campaign, both European heavyweights have continued in the same vein this season: as at the end of 2015, the midway point of the Bundesliga season, Bayern had already opened up an eight-point lead at the summit of the standings, losing just once while recording an impressive 15 wins in their opening 17 matches. Last year they took the German season by storm, sealing a third Bundesliga title on the trot for the fourth time in their history, and in some style: the Bavarians clinched the title on match-day 30, the third-fastest in the League's history, to earn a record 25th League triumph.

In La Liga, Barcelona ended 2015 with an emphatic 4-0 hammering of Real Betis on the penultimate day of the year, which left them joint-top of the standings with a game in hand, having lost just two of their 16 matches at that stage. This after winning last season's La Liga campaign to make it five League titles in the past seven years.

Both clubs beat their archrivals on the domestic front in convincing fashion in the first half of the current campaign, and both by four-goal margins: Barcelona stunned Real Madrid 4-0 in the first instalment of this season's El Clasico, while Bayern thumped nemesis Borussia Dortmund 5-1 in September.

Champions League

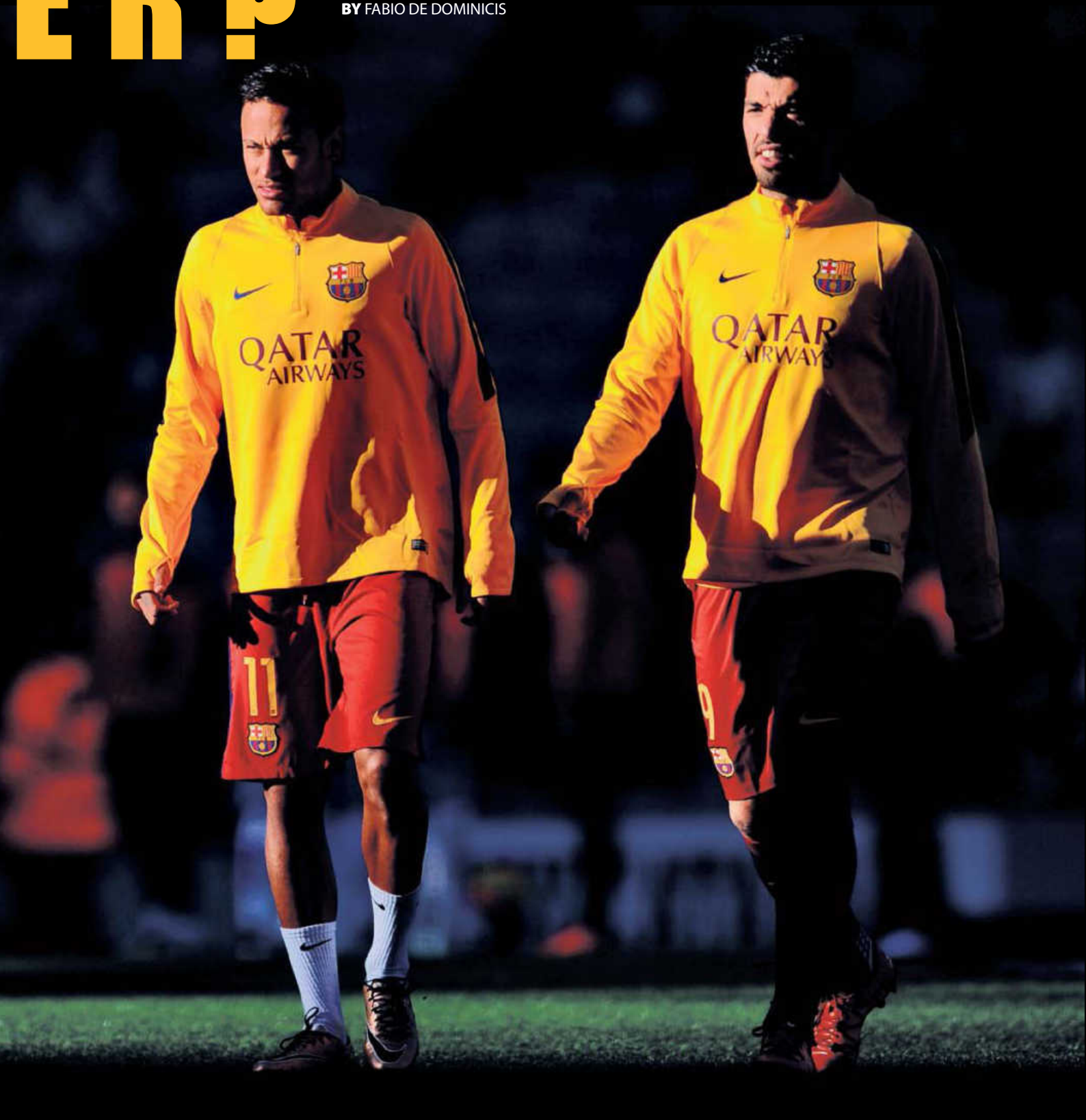
A glance at Europe's premier club competition, the Uefa Champions League, saw two of the competition's most successful sides navigate this season's group stage with ease. Bayern qualified top of



AYERN–ER?

A breakdown of the statistics, history and form guide of two of the hottest clubs in Europe.

BY FABIO DE DOMINICIS



Fast facts

- Only seven teams have achieved the European treble. Bayern Munich achieved the feat in 2013, while Barcelona have done it twice: in 2009 and 2015. The other clubs to have done so include Celtic, Ajax Amsterdam, PSV Eindhoven, Manchester United and Inter Milan.
- Four coaches have coached both Barcelona and Bayern Munich: Jack Domby, Udo Lattek, Louis van Gaal and Pep Guardiola.
- Barcelona's last match for 2015 was Lionel Messi's 500th for the club, when he managed to score his 425th goal in a 4-0 win over Real Betis.
- Bayern's final fixture of 2015 was a 1-0 win over Hannover in what was goalkeeper Manuel Neuer's 300th League appearance as he kept his 143rd clean sheet.



German shot-stopper Manuel Neuer has kept a clean sheet in an impressive 48 percent of the League matches he has played for the Bavarians

their group with a game to spare, conceding just three goals in six matches, while netting an impressive 19. They've made it to the semi-finals of the competition for the past four seasons in a row.

Holders Barcelona recorded four wins and two draws to guide them to the summit of Group E undefeated, scoring 15 goals in the process while conceding just four. Last season's success was the fifth European title in the club's history – and their fourth in the past nine years – as they drew level with Bayern as the third-most successful team in the competition behind Real Madrid (10 titles) and AC Milan (7).

Star performers

A look at the individual players in each team reveals some of the best talents in the game. Robert Lewandowski, Bayern's top marksman last season with 25 goals across all competitions, has been scintillating in the 2015/16 campaign thus far, scoring 23 goals in 26 matches before Christmas. And who could forget the Polish international's record-breaking five goals in nine minutes when he came on as a substitute to single-handedly destroy VfL Wolfsburg in their Bundesliga tie in September?

Equally as impressive for the Bavarians is German international Thomas Muller. The 26-year-old has scored 20-plus goals for Bayern in all of the past three seasons, and already sits on 23 goals in just 26 games this campaign.

Regarded as one of the most potent strikeforces in the world, Barcelona's Lionel Messi, Neymar and Luis Suarez have destroyed all in their path, scoring a combined 137 goals in 2015 – a mind-boggling 76 percent of Barça's record-breaking haul of 180 goals the entire calendar year! Messi and Suarez both tallied 48, with Neymar contributing an excellent 41. Ivan Rakitic was the next-best contributor with seven. Five-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi, despite a lengthy injury lay-off, continues to score at will, while Neymar is proving to be an assist machine, serving his teammates 14 times in the first 20 matches of the season. Yet most impressive of the trio in recent times has been Suarez. After scoring 25 goals in his first season in Catalonia, the Uruguayan had already passed that mark at the midway point of the current season, netting 26 in 25 matches before the start of 2016, as he takes the mantle of the trident's most successful finisher so far this season.

2015 Fifa Ballon d'Or nominees

Barcelona (6):
Andres Iniesta
Javier Mascherano
Lionel Messi
Neymar
Ivan Rakitic
Luis Suarez

Bayern Munich (5):
Robert Lewandowski
Thomas Muller
Manuel Neuer
Arjen Robben
Arturo Vidal



Men in charge

Bayern coach Pep Guardiola has seen and done it all. After replacing Frank Rijkaard as head coach of Barcelona, the ex-Barça player won an unprecedented sextuple with the Catalans in the 2008/09 season – the League, Champions League, Spanish Cup, Uefa Super Cup, Spanish Super Cup and Fifa Club World Cup. After stepping aside in 2012, Guardiola took a year off before taking charge of Bayern where, now in his third season, he has already delivered two League titles, the German Cup, Uefa Super Cup and 2013 Fifa Club World Cup.

The mesmerising passing game instilled by Guardiola at Barcelona was adapted to German conditions and has ensured Bayern's dominance on the domestic scene. Yet Pep is soon to go in search of a new adventure after announcing he will be stepping down at the end of

PICTURES BY DAVID RAMOS/GETTY IMAGES (1)/PAUL GILHAM/GETTY IMAGES (1)/PAUL GILHAM/GETTY IMAGES (1)



Robert Lewandowski has averaged 0.88 goals a game in the first half of the 2015/16 season

History and form guide

Trophies

Barcelona
(established in 1899)
La Liga: 23
Uefa Champions League: 5
Uefa Super Cup: 5
Spanish Cup: 27
Spanish Super Cup: 11
Fifa Club World Cup: 3

Bayern Munich
(established in 1900)
Bundesliga: 25
Uefa Champions League: 5
Uefa Super Cup: 1
German Cup: 17
German Super Cup: 4
Fifa Club World Cup: 1

Head-to-head
2014/15 Semi-finals
06/05/15 Barcelona 3-0 Bayern Munich
12/05/15 Bayern Munich 3-2 Barcelona
2012/13 Semi-finals
23/04/13 Bayern Munich 4-0 Barcelona
01/05/13 Barcelona 0-3 Bayern Munich

Recent form: Barcelona
Domestic League (past five years):
2014/15: Winners
2013/14: Runners-up
2012/13: Winners
2011/12: Runners-up
2010/11: Winners
Champions League (past five years):
2014/15: Winners
2013/14: Quarter-finals
2012/13: Semi-finals
2011/12: Semi-finals
2010/11: Winners

Bayern Munich
Domestic League (past five years):
2014/15: Winners
2013/14: Winners
2012/13: Winners
2011/12: Runners-up
2010/11: Third
Champions League (past five years):
2014/15: Semi-finals
2013/14: Semi-finals
2012/13: Winners
2011/12: Runners-up
2010/11: Round of 16

the season.

Luis Enrique, a former Barcelona player himself, took over at the start of last season and, like Guardiola, secured the treble in his first season in charge. Barça ended 2015 with five trophies, just one less than Pep's historic 2009 feat as they missed out on the Spanish Super Cup after a 5-1 aggregate humbling by Athletic Bilbao. Despite the transfer ban imposed on Barça in 2015, Enrique continued to get the best out of his star-studded squad, managing some of the biggest names in the sport to continue the club's impressive run this term.

Both coaches were nominated by Fifa for the 2015 Coach of the Year accolade, with Enrique claiming the prestigious prize.

Head-to-head

There have been many memorable match-ups between the two European giants, none more so than their Champions League semi-final showdown in the 2012/13 season, when Bayern obliterated their highly-rated rivals 4-0 in Germany before an emphatic 3-0 victory at Camp Nou to secure a 7-0 aggregate win on their way to lifting the European Cup that year. Barcelona avenged that defeat in the pair's last meeting in last year's semi-final tie, earning a 5-3 aggregate victory on their way to winning the title. With both looking strong in the competition this year, another match-up between the two foes could be on the cards this season.

Champions League Round of 16 ties
Barcelona vs Arsenal
Bayern Munich vs Juventus

Pro's verdict

According to former Manchester United midfielder Paul Scholes, Bayern and Barcelona are a class above the rest, yet the Englishman has revealed who he would fancy if they had to face off this season.

"We're talking about Bayern Munich being the team that are closest to Barça, and Barça destroyed Bayern Munich last year," he said in a recent interview. "They were much better than them.

"Barça and Bayern are, I think, miles ahead of any team. Real Madrid maybe, if on form, but I don't think there's anyone close.

"If they do come across each other, it could be interesting. But you have to fancy Barcelona."

The statistics speak for themselves, yet the form book is often thrown out the window in high-octane, pressure cup matches – a scenario both sides could find themselves in during the latter stages of the Champions League.

For Bayern, one might think the Bundesliga provides little competition due to their sheer dominance, yet results are never for free – they still have to be earned, a thought-process which Guardiola's charges continue to abide by. And with the decorated tactician's exit at the end of the season confirmed, a trophy-filled cabinet as a parting gift is definitely achievable for the ambitious club.

Barcelona seem to go from strength to strength, coping just fine in Messi's two-month injury absence as strike partners Neymar and Suarez continued to fire. The Catalans have been boosted by the addition of Aleix Vidal and Arda Turan to their squad following the lifting of their transfer ban, and with star-studded names across the pitch (six of whom made the final 23 nominees for the 2015 Fifa Ballon d'Or – one more than Bayern), there is quality from every position to give their opponents nightmares.

There seems to be no stopping either of these sides this season, but should they be paired off in the final rounds of continental competition, there can only one winner. Only time will tell who that will be ... KO

FOLLOW THE SUN



Everyday's a beach day across Mzansi this month! With temperatures soaring to record highs, make sure your wardrobe is geared for the blazing heat with these essentials from Spree.

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Black Top Mix Flip Flops, Havaianas - **R299**

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Stuff we like

Kick Off brings you the best selection of accessories, gadgets, tools and tech products to make sure you look the part in 2016.



Give your feet a boost

R2999 @ adidas Originals

Hip-Hop producer and rapper Kanye West and adidas Originals have put their creative heads together once again to release the Yeezy Boost 350. This lightweight trainer merges advanced footwear technology with West's innovative touch. The Yeezy Boost is made up of adidas' Primeknit material engineered for maximum comfort to help you hit the streets with a newfound swag.

Step up your sock game

R200 @ skinnysbu.co.za

After spotting a gap in the South African market for high quality socks, serial collector Sibusiso Ngwenya decided to launch his own label which gave birth to Skinny Sbu Socks. If you're a jetsetter looking to make a colourful statement, these socks are just for you.



Too fly to pass by

R899 @ Scotch & Soda stores

Barfly is the signature fragrance of fashion label Scotch & Soda. It has a distinct aroma full of exotic notes of sandalwood, jasmine, lavender and citrus-herb that will leave a lingering scent, much to the envy of your friends.





Squeaky clean 24/7

R299 @ TotalSports

The Sneaker LAB Premium Shoe Cleaning Kit combines four essential cleaning elements to make sure your sneakers stay fresh. The kit includes a sneaker cleaner, odour remover, suede protection spray and a compact brush fitted into a re-sealable velcro travel pouch to keep things neat and tidy.



Karabo the idol

R89.99 @ iTunes

Barely two months after being crowned the 11th champion of Idols SA last year, winner Karabo Mogane jumped straight into studio to release his debut album titled 'Love is a Verb'. The 11-track offering celebrates life and love in Karabo's smooth, soulful tone that won him millions of fans during the popular reality show.

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STAR LETTER

CLUBS DESERVE BETTER CHAIRMEN



Football is of central importance to the society we live in and needs to be valued continuously. To allow football teams to remain in the hands of entrepreneurs who know nothing about football's traditions and well thought-out management is an underlying concern. South Africa is in dire need of football-orientated chairmen and executives to keep the game's reputation intact, because the over-commercialisation of the game will completely denigrate the sport. The world of commerce must learn to nurture talent, leadership and management from a community perspective because football in South Africa is a way of life, not an economic driver for a privileged few.

Sfiso Xulu, Durban



Congratulations!

Sfiso Xulu wins a pair of Adidas LZ TRX Samba boots! Five Predator Zones give explosive power and sublime control, while the Sprintframe gives excellent manoeuvrability and traction. You can also win a pair of Adidas boots by sending your views in a star-quality letter to KICK OFF.

Make your point to the nation

To air your views, send your letters to Kick Off, People's Forum, PO Box 16368, Vlaeberg, 8018 or e-mail them to forum@kickoff.com

The views expressed in the letters published in People's Forum do not reflect the views of KICK OFF magazine, its editor, publisher or Media24. The editor reserves the right to edit and shorten letters. Letters shorter than 200 words will be given preference.

Yaya Toure is a sore loser

Yaya Toure's disparaging comments about CAF and Africa for not awarding him African Player of the Year was disappointing. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was fully deserving of the award due to his recent exploits in Germany as well as for Gabon. There was a time when Lucas Radebe was the toast of the town in England, while Benni McCarthy was scoring freely in the Champions League, but they were not recognised by CAF and didn't complain. Yaya has won the title four times already which is a feat in itself. His comments lack class.

David Sifiso Mabila

Coaches go on loan too

If you're a coach in South Africa, when you get fired, they don't really get rid of you completely. They want you to go to other clubs, gain more experience, refresh your mind and come back after six months with a new approach to the game. Maritzburg United's Ernst Middendorp is the latest beneficiary of this loan system for coaches. How will our standards improve if we continue allowing this to happen?

Stanley Malatse, via Facebook

Zizou understands Madrid

Congratulations are in order for Zinedine Zidane as new manager of Real Madrid. Zidane doesn't need an introduction. His record is there for everyone to see as one of the best midfielders of his generation who always gave his best for club and country.

If there's anyone who understands what is required at Real Madrid, it's Zizou. It's only fair that he's given a chance to pour back all those years of experience he gained as a player into coaching. All the best!

MaftownCity, via KickOff.com

Mbesuma banging them in

Ted Dumitru said the same thing about Collins Mbesuma (his impact over short

TALKING POINT • Rio 2016 here we come!



Marching to Rio!

The Under-23s represented the country well and made us all proud a few weeks ago. They displayed great focus, teamwork and strong mentality. Although our boys didn't start the campaign on a high, they ended up being the third-best team in the tournament. This now poses a challenge to the coaches of the clubs where these boys come from. We want to see them featuring regularly in the first team because it's clear they can deliver, so what is there to lose?

Bongiwe Mkhwanazi, Harrismith

Senegal lost it

Our destiny was written in the stars. We made it by the skin of our teeth through luck and prayer. I'm afraid some players should not get onto that plane to Rio 2016. This tournament exposed our frailties. We need players who are good enough to compete with the world's best players. Today we celebrate, but tomorrow we plan ahead because truth be told: we never won this game, Senegal lost it.

Ashley Aarons, via KickOff.com

Youngsters leading the way

This is a massive achievement especially considering we beat the hosts Senegal. With our senior national team struggling to qualify for big events, our Under-23s have sent a strong message to their older brothers that they are ready to fight for the nation. Coach Mashaba needs to call all those boys up and replace that entire ageing squad of his.

Nemusunda Mmboniseni, Makonde

The pitch was a problem

Congrats to the guys for soldiering through right until the end. Luckily Rio will be a different story with quality pitches and playing against real Under-23s from around the world. Dolly and co.will go far in the tournament despite their limited international experience. They should be proud of themselves and continue with the style of play that got them there.

TanaOff, via KickOff.com

Loyalty won't pay

There are glaring weaknesses staring us in the face and we survived knowing them. With all due respect to the players that helped us qualify, staying loyal to that starting XI that beat Senegal will be our downfall in Rio. The coach should not be sentimental regarding strengthening some positions. We need a natural right-back who can handle pacey wingers, a centre-back and a striker who can hold the ball up nicely. Lastly the team needs a strong leader like Andile Jali. Dolly should be left to do his attacking without the pressure of the armband.

Shuz, via KickOff.com

LOOKALIKES



Wayne Arendse, who prefers to quietly goes about his business at centre-back for Mamelodi Sundowns, could easily pass as 5FM's motormouth DJ Warras' brother.

Send us your look-alikes and WIN!

Bruce Plaatjies from Alberton wins himself a DX Smooth men's skincare hamper worth R350 for sending us his lookalikes. Put your matchmaking skills to the test and you too can be a winner!



Send us your lookalikes (one of whom must be a soccer personality) along with your name and address to competitions@kickoff.com. Use 'DX Smooth Lookalikes' in the subject line.

distances rather than being forced to track back) almost a decade ago and he got results from the burly striker. A good coach implements a style that suits his playing personnel and not the other way around. Mbesuma was castigated and called names because amateur coaches in the PSL wanted him to do things that he's not capable of doing.

Ren Mudau, via Kickoff.com



Big Two must take us to the next level

Given their local dominance, Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates have failed to seize the opportunity to reach a wider supporter base outside the country. One would have thought the Vodacom Challenge of yesteryear would have given these clubs a platform to learn a thing or two about global reach. Chiefs and Pirates are still tapping into limited local sponsorship coffers with no apparent initiative to lure international corporate players.

Why is there no drive to bring in well-known international players on the brink of retirement to finish their last playing days here? Surely this would lure more numbers to the stadiums. Surely if Chiefs were pro-active and eager to take the club forward, their dream stadium in Krugersdorp would be a reality now.

Surely with the mileage Pirates have attained from their successful run in African football competitions, they ought to be using this to enhance their authority through partnerships on the continent?

It's a shame the Soweto giants are playing second fiddle to Ajax, SuperSport and Wits who have entered partnerships with various international football clubs to improve themselves. The proof can be seen at junior national team level where these clubs are dominant because of the quality of their academy programmes modelled alongside their international partners.

Chumani Ntlale, Mossel Bay

Big ups to Majoro

Orlando Pirates striker Lehlohonolo Majoro needs to be commended for establishing a career outside of football. I've come to learn that Major is a qualified radiographer and runs a mobile X-ray unit travelling to various communities rendering his services. He is one of very few footballers who are armed with a formal education that will sustain them once their playing days are over. The majority of our footballers drive flashy cars and spend their cash extravagantly, yet fail to plan for the future. I hope the current generation of footballers look up to Majoro and not fall into the same trap.

Nyaniso Funani, Fort Beaufort

End of the road for Swallows

What is happening at Moroka Swallows at the moment seems to mark the beginning of the end for the football club. Their relegation to the NFD revealed that Leon Prins was not running the club well after all. Certain operations were veiled in secrecy and shareholders were undermined.

Prins essentially ruled the club unilaterally. His resignation has rendered the club bankrupt with employees forced to take legal action to get their salaries. If a new investor doesn't appear soon, we could see the

SYDNEY MAHLANGU/ BACKPAGEPIX(1)/SYDNEY MAHLANGU/ BACKPAGEPIX(1)/STEVE HAAG/GALLO IMAGES(1)/SYDNEY MAHLANGU/ BACKPAGEPIX(1)

once mighty Dube Birds dissolving into history.

Akhona Ndletyana, Cape Town

Post-career options

Often times, we hear stories about former players riddled by poverty. This is of massive concern. Players must be made aware of the various post-career options available to ensure their lives don't come to a standstill as soon as their contracts are up. Apart from coaching, former players can do commentary, broadcasting, administration or even pursue other avenues unrelated to the game. Players must invest in their education to make sure they are employable post-retirement. Football is nothing but a short career.

Siboniso Zwane, Manzini, Swaziland

Baroka lighting up NFD

Baroka FC are not just adding numbers to the NFD. They are a marvel to watch and making Limpopo proud. As chairperson Khurishi Mphahlele said, they won't stay longer than three seasons in the NFD and they are proving it. The boys are improving every game both home and away. All thanks to Khurishi for believing in Kgoloko Thobejane to lead the team and keep the momentum going.
Shine Baroka shine!

Letladi wa Ga-Mphahlele, Maralaleng

Overhaul needed at Chiefs

Losing two cup finals in the space of three months is very painful for any team, especially for Kaizer Chiefs who are known as cup kings. Stuart Baxter's departure as well as that of key personnel seems to have destabilised the team. The dilemma for Steve Khompela is that he's relied too much on tried and tested players which has left insufficient space for exploring new combinations and strategies. Logic teaches us that any machine requires major servicing and replacement of components after running for a long time. It is vital that Khompela brings in young players and quickly integrates the new signings in order to return to winning ways.

Sechaba Motaung, Mondeor

BEAT THE PLAYER

1. How many Orlando Pirates players were selected for the CAF U-23 African Cup of Nations?
2. Which team is sponsored by Yokohama in the English Premier League?
3. Mamelodi Sundowns play their home games at which ground?
4. Who was Bayern Munich's manager before Pep Guardiola was hired in 2013?
5. Former Kaizer Chiefs and Mamelodi Sundowns midfielder Josta Dladla is now playing for which NFD team?
6. Who said these words: "After Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, Eden Hazard is my favourite player."
7. Benni McCarthy is the assistant manager of which Belgian Pro League team?
8. Who wears jersey number 10 at Manchester United?
9. Who was the first player to win the KICK OFF Footballer of the Season award?
10. Gianluigi Buffon plays for which team in the Serie A?



OBAKENG MOEPI
AGE: 24
FROM: Oudtshoorn
TEAM: Orlando Pirates

1. Two (correct)
2. Chelsea (correct)
3. Loftus (incorrect)
4. Not sure (incorrect)
5. Moroka Swallows (correct)
6. Ronaldinho (incorrect)
7. Gent (incorrect)
8. Wayne Rooney (correct)
9. Marks Maponyane (correct)
10. Juventus (correct)

TOTAL: 6/10



MHLONISHWA ZULU
AGE: 32
FROM: Matatiele
TEAM: Kaizer Chiefs

1. Six (incorrect)
2. Chelsea (correct)
3. Lucas Masterpieces Moripe Stadium (correct)
4. Not sure (incorrect)
5. Alexandra United (incorrect)
6. Zinedine Zidane (correct)
7. Not sure (incorrect)
8. Wayne Rooney (correct)
9. Helman Mkhalele (incorrect)
10. Juventus (correct)

TOTAL: 5/10



NATHAN PAULSE
AGE: 33
POSITION: Striker
TEAM: Ajax Cape Town

1. Two (correct)
2. Chelsea (correct)
3. Lucas Masterpieces Moripe Stadium (correct)
4. Jupp Heynckes (correct)
5. Moroka Swallows (correct)
6. Zinedine Zidane (correct)
7. Sint-Truidense V.V. (correct)
8. Wayne Rooney (correct)
9. Doctor Khumalo (incorrect)
10. Juventus (correct)

TOTAL: 9/10

Two readers take on a PSL star in a quiz. You can also take part by sending a hi-res photo with your full name, age, phone number and location to forum@kickoff.com, with the subject line 'Beat the Player'.



Take the damn picture!

The North London derby is among the oldest and fiercest rivalries in world football ... so it was surprising to see Tottenham Hotspur's Erik Lamela keep his cool and not punching the Arsenal fan next to him!



Like father, like son ...

Remember Zinedine Zidane's famous Marco Materazzi head-butt during the 2006 World Cup Final? Well it seems the apple doesn't fall far from the tree as Zidane's son Luca (who is a goalkeeper) was sent off playing for Real Madrid's youth team for the same offence against Atletico Madrid's U-17s!



Ronaldo's epic photobomb

Cristiano Ronaldo won't let any player steal his shine at Real Madrid. Poor Marcelo could barely get a word in during a TV interview when his Portuguese teammate jumped in to share the limelight.



Oops, there goes the groom!

The valiant effort of a young lady turned sour when she proposed to her man at a soccer match in front of thousands of spectators. Unfortunately for her, the potential groom said, "I don't" and ran for his life!



A pain in the butt!!!

Sporting Charleroi defender Javier Martos had the bad luck of getting injured 'down below' during a match against Brugge KV in the Belgian championship. But rather than using the famed magic spray, Charleroi's doctor took out a freeze gun to assist the player.

LAUGH WITH PROFF

CONTACT PROFF To get in touch with Proff, check out his blog – diskioff.blogspot.com – or catch him on www.kickoff.com/forum.

ANC agrees to buy Norwich City



South Africa's governing political party the ANC has reached a purchase agreement with Norwich City FC. The party has acquired 100% ownership in the side known as 'The Canaries'. They become the second South African-owned English Premier League team after Swansea City.

By Thapelo Moloantoa

Mabizela takes on SABC Inspectors

Inspectors from the SABC come knocking on Mbulelo 'OJ' Mabizela's door to inspect his TV licence.

SABC Inspector: Good afternoon sir, may we see your TV licence please?

Mabizela: I don't have a TV.

SABC Inspector: We saw your TV aerial outside your house which means you have a TV?

Mabizela takes the inspector to his kitchen, opens the fridge and asks the inspector: "What is this?"

SABC Inspector: Milk.

Mabizela: So does this milk tell you that I have cows inside my house?



Orlando Pirates vs Kaizer Chiefs fans

Orlando Pirates fan: Orlando Pirates will be remembered for winning the CAF Champions League in 1995. What will Kaizer Chiefs be remembered for?

Kaizer Chiefs fan: Kaizer Chiefs will be remembered for winning the 2001 African Cup Winners' Cup and for being the only South African team to win the African Club of the Year.

Orlando Pirates fan: Who remembers that?

Kaizer Chiefs fan: You don't remember 2001 but you remember 1995? My friend, you suffer from conditional amnesia!

Supa Strikas™

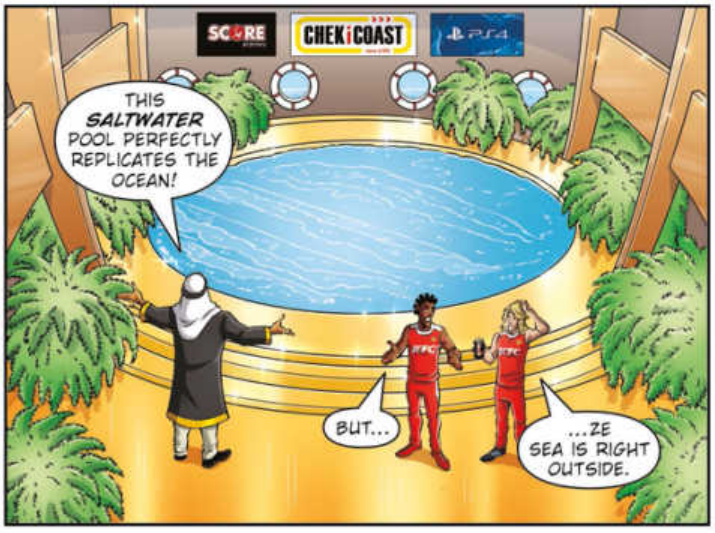
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HAPPY HOLIDAY HELL



THE Christmas holidays are not always fun for players. Everyone else has a good time eating and drinking whatever they want and going out late, but you have to watch yourself. You get weighed before the holidays and fined if you come back overweight.

You can have a few drinks, but let yourself go for one big night and you'll end up in the news – and you don't want the coach to see that.

Most players enjoy seeing their families over this time, although there are always a few relatives who think Christmas is all about getting stuff from you. Your tracksuits and boots become family property – everything is claimed by relatives who don't even go and watch you play. You're the one making money from soccer so there is an expectation that you will fund the Christmas feast.

There's also always the one uncle who has a few drinks and starts to criticise your performances. He used to be a township star so now he thinks he is an expert on the modern game. The more he drinks the more critical he is.

"Too much running, too little quality, there is no dribbling anymore, no entertainment. I used to watch Ace and Bizzah and Teenage so I know what I am talking about."

With respect to the older generation, you can't compare the modern game to the walking football that was played in the 1970s and early '80s – that was entertainment, but it wasn't professional. Try and play the modern game with a paunch, and you'll die.

> ***"You don't want to be the player with the old phone or the 2010 iPad."***

Talking of paunches, there's always one player who comes back after New Year five kilos heavier. The coaching staff are not impressed and the player is immediately singled out for individual running exercises, much to the joy of his teammates. This is balanced out by the player who has obviously spent his entire holiday in the gym. The coaching staff ask why the rest of us don't have his dedication and commitment. We all plan to kick him in training for showing us up.

The January transfer window is also open and the club's star player is on the radar of a few of the bigger clubs. His agent hovers around training a lot more, always on his phone a lot. The player won't say anything, but you can see he is enjoying the attention. So you make him aware that you are still around – you get a chance to tackle him hard and you take it. He is your teammate today, but he could be your opponent next week.

There are also rumours about your team bringing in new players. The first thing you do is look at what positions these players play – if there is someone in your position, you make a mental note to do that little bit extra at training. The start of the new year is also the time for new boots. Your sponsor has dropped off a few pairs for you and even though you've been playing the game for years, you still get that excitement that little kids get when they get a new toy. These are your weapons of war!

Not everyone has new boots though, and one or two of the players hand out spare pairs to some of the younger players. A few of the players bring their new gadgets to training – phones, iPods, iPads, watches – all the toys of the professional sportsman. Each player gives his expert verdict, and you have to keep up with the rest of the dressing room – if you don't, then you make yourself a target for abuse. You don't want to be the player with the old phone or the 2010 iPad. This is a competitive sport! KO

PICTURES BY CHELSEA FC/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES (1)

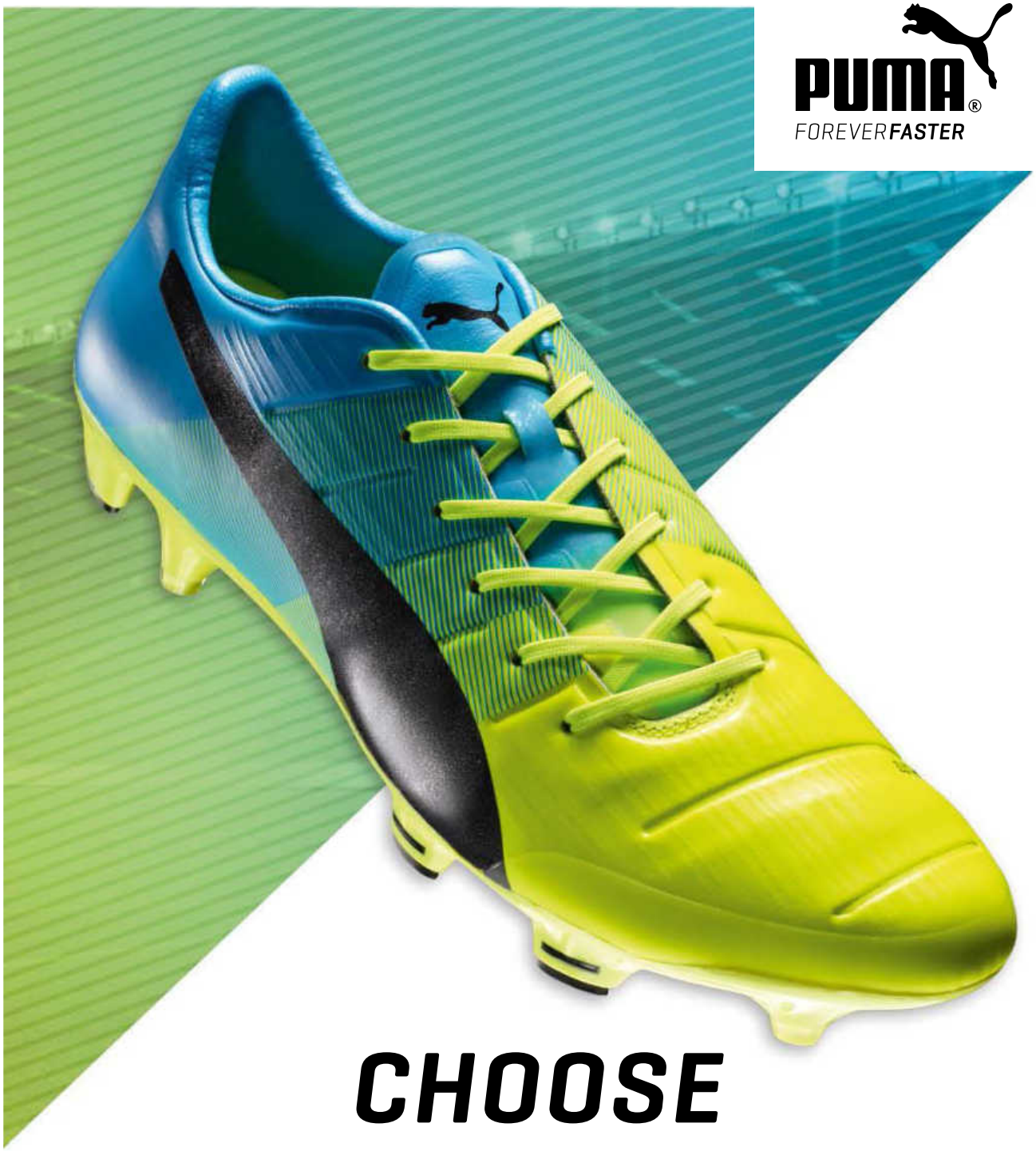
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